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Parochial Tracts.

T R A C T S

FOR

P A R O C H I A L U S E,

BY CONTRIBUTORS

TO THE

"TRACTS FOR THE CHRISTIAN SEASONS."

V O L. III.

OXFORD,
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*A WORD TO THE PARENTS OF MY
SUNDAY SCHOLARS.*

“ I ALWAYS send him regularly, Sir. He ought to be at his Sunday-school with the rest. It's not my wish he should stay away, nor his father's neither.”

Mrs. Matthews spoke civilly enough, but I felt sad as I walked away from the door of her cottage. I had called to have a talk with her about her youngest boy; one of my Sunday scholars, who is not quite the good boy I could wish him to be. And I had hoped I might have found a father or mother at home wishing to see their child trained up a good Christian child, and ready to lend me a helping hand in my endeavours. But I found Mrs. Matthews a hard-working matronly woman, who kept her home clean and her children neat, and desired to see them turn out respectably in this world, but had little thought of ever teaching any thing

but how to get on here, little thought about their souls, little thought of leading them to Christ. Her husband was a journeyman printer, who sat at home on Sunday mornings reading his newspaper, and had hardly been to Church, I am afraid, three or four times since he had been a school-boy himself. And both of them thought, I could soon see, that if they sent their boy clean and punctually to school, they had done all I could in reason expect of them..

So I walked away sadly, as I said, and I began to think to myself, it was small good I could ever do little John Matthews at school, if I got no more help than that at home. I must do what I can, I must try and teach him what's right. But it is like pulling against the stream. He's so much more likely to do what he sees father do, than to do what he is taught to do at school. And then I went on thinking about the parents of my other scholars; and I could not help feeling certain about one or two that I should get very little help from them; and there were others, I thought, who might work with me much more than they did.

So my friends, let me have a friendly word with you. Read this little paper through. For the love of your children read it, and think over

it. Do think what I am teaching them every Sunday, to say their prayers, and go to Church and honour God's holy name, and to read in that Holy Book which shews us the way to heaven. And what must they think when they go home and see the contrary of these things? It cannot make them respect you. And you would like to have them love and respect you. And that is just what we want; we try and teach them to be good and dutiful children to you. But then, you must set them a good example, you must make them look up to you in religion as well as in every thing else. Even if you have been living careless, godless lives hitherto, the thought surely of your children growing up round you should rouse you and make you mend. You may now be sitting with this Tract in your hands in the midst of your children. There's one of them on your knee, and another on a stool at your feet; and your eldest boy is leaning over the table and reading a book which has been lent him from the school. Now I can understand a man looking round upon their little faces, and thinking to himself, 'well, I must make a beginning, I must try and live a little more like a Christian man; and set those dear children a better example than I have done.' And I should not think the

worse of him, if he were to draw his sleeve across his eyes and pray a moment in his heart, 'Lord forgive me! Lord help me! Lord guide me to teach my children right!' Aye, begin this way to make a Christian and happy home. Then may you look to see your children respect and love you the more, the older they grow. Then we may hope our Sunday-school teaching will sink into their hearts and do them lasting good; when a boy can think within himself, as his teacher tells him any thing, 'yes, that's just what father says, that's what father and mother do:' when he sees you at Church duly, and observes you read the Scriptures and other good books, and knows that you kneel down by the bedside, as he is taught to do, he is likely to think much of Church and Holy Scripture and Prayer; I should never have any fear of my little Sunday-scholars if they had all such homes as that.

But, my friends, it's more than example I must ask you for. Example is better than precept. But they must have precept too, and you must take your share in it. It's your peculiar duty as parents, and no Sunday-school or any thing else can take it off your hands. Indeed, I have known some labouring people, who

for this reason would not send their children to Sunday-school on any account. They said they always heard them their Catechism and took them to Church themselves, and I am sure I would not wish such parents to do any thing differently. But if you please to send your children to Sunday-school, because you have not leisure, or do not feel yourselves so well able to instruct them ; still, let me remind you, it must ever remain your duty to teach them all you can. You are father and mother. You cannot shake off that burden, I should rather say that privilege, because I or any other friend are willing to help you in it. And further, if I help you, you must help me. If I hear your boys' lessons at school, and give up to them my time and strength, and try and teach them that faith and duty by which they may be saved, surely I may look to you to support me in all this. You must not only send them to school clean and punctual, and take care to provide each of them with his Prayer-book ; a Sunday school-boy should never come without that : but you may do more than this to help me. For instance, you may see that they learn their lessons properly before they come. The best scholar in my class says his Collect and Psalm, I find, to his mother over-night. And

he is the best boy as well as the best scholar I have. When they come home again, you might make them tell you what I have been teaching them about, and that would be sure to render them more attentive at their lessons. I don't mean to complain of my boys. They are good boys, most of them, and take pains, I am sure, and it is a pleasure to me to teach them. But still if you were to make a habit of questioning them afterwards on what I had said, I do not doubt they would take even more pains to remember it, they would see that you and I were working together for their good. And besides, I am sure there's not one of them but would be pleased to be asked to say over to his father a psalm or hymn he had learnt at school. Besides, I must tell you, that if I find a father or a mother taking pains at home in this way with their boy, I always take more pains with that boy myself. I feel sure that he is more worth taking pains about, he is more likely to remember what I tell him. The seed sown in that boy's heart is more likely to sink in and spring up an hundred-fold, because it is watered by a father's or a mother's hand.

So here we come to the same matter again. If a boy is to get any good by Sunday-

school teaching, why he must have home teaching too. And if I work for you, you must not think it a great matter if I ask you to work with me. For again, I say, I do not wish to take your children's teaching off your hands, only to help you in it, where you find yourselves unequal. So you must help me. You must water the seed I sow: and then God will give us increase.

You would not like to see your children lost in hell; then you must not leave it all to me to bring them to Him who has the keys of heaven. You must live religiously yourselves, you must be earnest and serious members of Christ's Church, you must pray much for your own souls and your children, and then, I trust, father, and mother, and child, and pastor will all meet in heaven through the merits of our dear Lord. Yes; I trust this will happen to us: but we must all do our parts; we have all souls to save, and we have children's souls hanging upon ours. What we do, they are likely to do; what we are, they are likely to become; if we join together to bring them to Christ, and serve Him ourselves, we may have the joy of seeing them hereafter with Christ for ever. But do not let us pull two ways; do not let there be a holy

school and an unholy home for the children after school; for then you will be busy in untwisting the cord I am busy in twisting; you will pull down what I build up; and if your children perish at last in hell, they will owe it not to the school but to home, and their blood will be upon their parents' head.

*A WORD OF EXHORTATION TO THE YOUNGER
WOMEN OF HIS FLOCK.*

BY A VILLAGE PASTOR.

MY DEAR SISTERS IN CHRIST,

I HAVE long been anxious to write to you a few words on a very important subject. It is a subject that greatly concerns your spiritual welfare. Not that I forget your worldly welfare. God forbid: for I do most heartily wish you well, and pray that you may always have what is needful for you. But I am most anxious about your spiritual welfare, and the state of your souls in another world. If I did not think much of your spiritual welfare, I should be far from being a faithful follower of Christ, and very, very far from being a faithful steward of His mysteries who has shewn such care for your sex. By His mercy you are greatly exalted even in this world. He has, as it were, taken you out of the mire,

dence would not wish to be settled in life before she had laid something by in store to provide the common comforts of married life ; and let me tell them further, that if they dress gaily in order to attract the attention of young men, they make a greater and more serious mistake still. If it is needful to marry, a young woman should desire to marry *well*. I mean by *that*, to marry a sober and honest and industrious, but, above all, a religious young man—one who will be a helpmate to her, and that in the best meaning of the word—one who will not only be anxious to keep her in comfort here as to worldly things, but who will be more anxious to provide for her comfort of a better kind—that comfort which will follow her to another world, and continue for ever. Now, I say, that to dress finely and gaily is not the way to win the affections of such a young man. Such a young man has his thoughts set on heaven, and he will look out for a helpmate who he has good reason to believe from her daily conduct has her affections set there too, who will be able to help him in his journey thitherward. Such a young man will remember what is said in the Bible of the way in which godly women of old, like Sarah, Abraham's wife, adorned themselves : that their adorning was not that outward

adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, and of putting on of apparel, but the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. And he will say, these gaudy ribbons are not the signs of a meek and quiet spirit: no, they are the signs of a vain, and weak, and giddy, and fickle spirit, that loves the world and the things of the world, and has no thought of another world, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Young women who adorn themselves in that way will not help me forward in the way that leadeth to life. They will not make me comfortable in my home here, nor love to speak of those things which I know from experience are the only sources of true comfort.

My young friends, such is the way in which a prudent and godly young man would reason—the only character that can make you happy. But if you do not win such an one by your fine, and gaudy, and tawdry dressing, whom are you likely to win?—one, to be sure, whose mind resembles your own—one who has a vain, and foolish, and darkened heart—one who will help you forward in the broad way that leads to destruction. My young friends, you cannot have forgotten the history of Dinah, the patriarch Jacob's daughter. It is read every year in our

most heinous sin in God's sight, and, think what you will, marriage does not blot it out—you have committed a sin which can only be forgiven on deep repentance for Christ's sake. I know, indeed, that when a young woman who has committed this great sin against God is afterwards married, she is commonly said to have been made an honest woman of, and her neighbours live with her just as if nothing had happened, and so she deceives her own heart, and thinks, because persons who have perhaps done in their youth just as she has done do not appear to think the worse of her, that all is right. But all is not right. The sin is recorded in the great book of account, and will remain there till the day of judgment; and if it is not earnestly repented of, and repented of, too, after the manner which St. Paul speaks of in the seventh chapter of his second Epistle to the Corinthians, she cannot obtain forgiveness. If it is not repented of, I say, and pardon sought for carefully with tears, through the atoning blood of Christ,—if it is not earnestly repented of, it will ruin her soul for ever. It must be earnestly repented of, my dear sisters, I entreat you to observe, and not because it has brought her into worldly trouble, but because she has offended a pure and holy God.

No: nor is all right even in this world. Though people who ought to know better*, and who commit a great sin themselves by such conduct, make light of the sin, and disguise the true nature of it by mincing and unmeaning names, and call that which is really whoredom, a slip, or a mistake, or a misfortune, and so do their parts in aiding the devil to ruin her soul; yet her sin will be sure to find her out. Soft names and expressions of worldly pity cannot stay the just judgment of God. You might as well strive to turn the course of a deluge with a besom. No, I say, her sin will be sure to find her out in *some* way. She may eat and wipe her mouth, and say, I have done no wickedness, (Prov. xxx. 20,) but an offended God will visit her for her sin even in this world. Her husband, who wickedly seduced her before marriage, will not respect her as if she had been chaste, and will shew it. He must and will have doubts of her. Perhaps, also, she may bring into the world stubborn and rebellious children, who will set her at nought and treat her with disrespect; and her very husband may add to his

* Persons who do not mark their sense of the sin by a change of conduct towards those who have committed it, may truly be said to encourage it, for there are those who will argue therefrom that it cannot be very wrong. Surely such persons may apply to themselves the words of St. John—"He that biddeth him God speed is a partaker of his evil deeds."

former sin by teaching them to be disrespectful towards her ; or her husband will be a drunkard, and make her life miserable by ill-usage, and by spending money, that ought to go to provide bread and clothes for her children, in strong drink. Oh, that women, who had committed this sin, could be persuaded to look upon their trouble in this light ! that they would recognise the hand of God in their afflictions. Oh, that they would acknowledge that they are justly punished, that it is His work ! Then there would be hope that in His wrath He would remember mercy. Then there would be hope that they would be brought to repentance, not to be repented of, that Jesus Christ would wash away their sins, and though they had been as scarlet, make them as white as wool. But, alas ! their proud, rebellious heart too often kicks against the pricks. Because foolish man has justified them, they will continue to excuse and justify themselves. But it will be a vain endeavour to look for peace to their souls in this way ! No excuse they can make will heal their sore. There can be no peace for them till they have humbled themselves to the very dust before Him, who alone can give them peace ; no peace till they have sought for pardon through the merits of His

most precious blood, who alone can put away their sin.

But here I must not in any way be understood to speak of those—the few, the very few, I fear, who have already seen and acknowledged their sin—who are bowed down to the earth by the remembrance of it—who were overcome, perhaps, by some sudden temptation, and from the very day have sued for pardon—who cannot forgive themselves, and, therefore, fear lest they may not be forgiven. No, I must not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. I must pour balm into their wounds. I must speak a word to revive the spirit of the humble ones, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Them I must remind that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. I must assure them, though there is no peace for the wicked, that on such as they are, their God will have mercy ; that He will blot out their iniquity, and will remember it no more.

There is one other temptation or danger to which the younger women are exposed, to which I would wish at this time to call your attention. It relates to married young women, and arises from an error in judgment, and leads to a fault which is almost sure to be the cause of much unhappiness in this world ; and well will it be if

it does not end in the eternal ruin of the soul. Women who are not eaten up with the vanity of dress, and who have not defiled themselves by whoredom before marriage, are equally liable to it. It is not an uncommon thing, my young friends, to hear wives making complaint of their husbands for spending their evenings at a public-house. Now I am grieved to think that they too frequently have not much right to make this complaint, for they have brought their sorrow upon themselves. Their husbands, when they come home wearied with their day's labour, must naturally look for a quiet comfortable fire-side, a nicely-prepared meal, and a cheerful smile to welcome them. They have a right to expect it on every account. With the sweat of their brow they have earned the means of subsistence, and the Word of God is most plainly on their side, not in the very words, indeed, that I have set down, but in words much stronger in their spirit—such as these, for instance, “Let the wife see that she reverence her husband,” and others, which are collected from Holy Scripture, and appointed to be read at the conclusion of the marriage service. But the thoughtless newly-married wife frequently does not think of this. Her vanity, perhaps, may make her wish to be looked upon as

a notable and good housewife, or she may be indifferent to what her husband thinks. She has secured a home, that is enough for her. Whichever reason it may be, when he comes home at night he finds her busy about her household concerns : she has not got her house nicely swept and garnished, or, perhaps, she is washing out her linen, or preparing to bake the bread, or employed in some other occupation, which makes the house equally uncomfortable, all which might have been done earlier in the day. For a short time her husband, who really loves her, may put up with this. He may make allowances for a young and inexperienced housekeeper, but he will not do so long. Finding his comfort so little attended to at home, and not learning his lesson from the Word of God in the Bible, which would teach him how to behave under his trial, he will seek the fire-side of one whose interest it is to make him comfortable. At that house he cannot but drink a little, and by degrees he learns to be a drunkard. At first he went there, as *he* would say, in self-defence, because his own house was not comfortable and prepared to receive him. He was glad, therefore, to hurry over a slovenly-prepared meal, and join the company of men, who, like himself, had not a comfortable home, or kind and affectionate wife.

He went there in self-defence, he would say, and continues to go there because he has learned to love strong drink, and takes delight in the loose conversation he too frequently meets with. Then, what comes next? Alas! alas! a half-starved wife and ragged and unhealthy and neglected children. All this might have been prevented, if the young wife had known her duty better, and had really loved her husband; if she had revered her husband, as she is bidden in God's Word, and had done her best, with God's help, to make him comfortable at home.

My young friends, does the word I speak pain you? Does it touch you to the quick? Do not, then, account me your enemy because I tell you the truth! Do not be angry because I am so plain-spoken. I speak for your own good, for the sake of your happiness in this world and in the next. I would lay open the sore, that you may learn how and where to heal it. Be thankful, then, that you have felt what I have said to be your case—that God has, in His great mercy, brought conviction to your soul. Look upon it as a token that the Holy Spirit has not forsaken you; as an earnest, if you anxiously desire it, and seek it through His dear Son, Jesus Christ, that He will give you more grace to amend your conduct,

and begin at once to amend it. Do not delay for a single moment. The opportunity once let go may never return. Hereafter, indeed, you may hear, but you may not understand. The Lord has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Let the young woman, then, who has been vain of dress, be vain no more, but clothe herself modestly, and in a way befitting her station in life; let her be a keeper at home, and never leave her parents' roof after the day has drawn to a close—to do that is the first and sure step to every evil work. Let the young married woman be careful to please her husband in all good things, as a servant of Christ; and, if God has given her children, let her make it her especial care to train them up to His service; and, as a necessary means thereto, let her teach them always to obey her promptly, without answering a single word. For, as St. John reasons about love, if a man love not his brother, whom he hath seen, how shall he love God, whom he hath not seen? So if a child does not obey its earthly parents, neither will it obey its Father which is in heaven. I have written about this duty because it is so very important an one. All around us looks as if those perilous times were come of which St. Paul speaks, and one of the most striking signs

of it is the increasing disobedience of children to parents. God forbid that at the last day you should be found amongst those who did not chasten their children betimes, who suffered them to grow up a stubborn and rebellious race, without correction and reproof. May you rather partake of Abraham's reward, to whom the Almighty Himself bare this noble witness : "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."

And now, bidding you heartily farewell,

I remain, your faithful

FRIEND and PASTOR.

*MR. SHARPLEY,
OR A TALE FOR THE OVER-THRIFTY.*

TWENTY years' absence from my native place had worked many changes both in men and things. When I came back to Powerstone I hardly knew either the people or the place. New houses had sprouted up, and old houses had tumbled down; middle-aged and elderly houses had clothed their faces with paint and plaster to conceal their age from curious eyes, and to hide the wrinkles that were beginning to seam the walls. Streets were widened in this direction and lengthened in that; the old gable ends were fast disappearing, and the modern rivalry in shop-fronts had already commenced even in this distant town; omnibuses, those long boxes of human luggage, lumbered noisily through the streets towards a neighbouring railroad. How unlike the quiet sleepy Powerstone of old.

The people had also changed. Little prattling

infants that I had tossed in my arms, now matched me in height; and those to whom I had given coral and ginger-bread now sent their children to get lolly-pops from my pocket, or to have a dance on my knee; the men of middle life were now grey or bald, fast going down the hill of life; while a very little remnant of the old folks might be seen tottering about and basking in the more sunny corners of the little town, some deaf, some half blind, some infants again in understanding, the wrecks and rickety resemblances of their former selves, shuffling onwards a few paces towards their graves.

But besides these changes in the outward world of Powerstone, in men's looks, or the outward appearance of the town, there were inward alterations too; characters were changed, some for the better, some for the worse.

Boys that had been greedy of cakes and apples were now greedy of greater things, and were elbowing their way in the world with a grasping selfish spirit; children that had been noisy and quarrelsome were now mixed up in all the heats and angers and sharp doings of political party; light laughing girls had turned into widows with care-worn looks and heavy hearts, and yet some of them softened and sobered by

their afflictions, the bitter cross that had been laid on them having led them to Him who calls the weary and heavy-laden to Himself; others on whom trouble had fallen had only become fretful and impatient, murmuring at their lot, and looking at all things with a sour complaining mind.

But there was one of my old townsmen whom I found more altered than all the rest; this was Mr. Benjamin Sharpley. When I left Powerstone he was a man of about forty years old, he was now sixty. He was then a hard-working man, a bustling tradesman. He was thriving in the world, for he was slaving for the world; his whole heart was given up to business; he was looked upon as "a highly respectable" person, was honest in all his dealings, and being a thriving man, had that sort of influence which increasing money and increasing prosperity are sure to give in this world. To my mind he was thoroughly, entirely eaten up with covetousness; he was at work by day-break, and you might see a light in his window late at night; he cared for nothing else but his shop; he talked of nothing else but business, he thought of nothing else. To get rich was his one aim; he lived very plainly; spent next to nothing,

gave nothing away, except when it was "the respectable thing" to do, as on charity sermons and on such-like occasions, was of a cold, hard, selfish temper. Religion! what had he to do with that? that was for the poor, or the sick, or the dying, according to his view; at any rate he pushed all such things from his mind; his shop was enough for him; he could not attend to two things at once, and that was true. "It was all very well for people to be religious," he used to say, "he did not object to it; of course it was very proper; he respected religious people;" but he himself had no heart for it. It is true he went to church once a Sunday; it was respectable to go to church, and he had a large high pew, for alas, there were large high pews then in Powerstone church. Such was Mr. Benjamin Sharpley, a man thoroughly for this world, prudent and hoarding. He was unmarried, as he had always dreaded the expense of marriage; his nearest relations were two nephews, wild and gay young men who lived at some distance, whom he never saw and never liked. Of course among the gossips of Powerstone it was often a knotty subject of debate what would become of Mr. Sharpley's money when he died.

Great therefore was my surprise when, on attending daily service which had been begun at Powerstone, I found Mr. Benjamin Sharpley always there. "This *is* a change," I said to myself, "how can he find time on week-days for this? or rather how has he got the heart for this Christian business?" On coming out of church one day he give me a warm greeting; the whole man had thawed, if I may so speak; his very countenance was more mild and kindly, not so close or shrewd as it was before. When we parted he could not help saying, "Is'nt it a privilege, Sir? is'nt it a blessing to have the church open daily?" Away he hurried to his shop without waiting for a reply, and I was left lost in wonder. The first Sunday after my arrival I most thankfully partook of the blessed feast of the Lord's Supper; it was a joyful yet an affecting hour; twenty years had gone; twenty years of trial had passed over my head, and many troubles had I been called to bear; "Here I am," I thought within myself, "once more in the old church; once more in the holy house of God, where I worshipped in my youth. How many have been stricken down since I last was here! How many knees that knelt at the altar are now mouldering in their graves! How many have

gone to their account, and can no more pour forth their souls in the house of prayer." Such thoughts passed through my mind during the pause that took place before the Communion Service began. When I knelt at the altar, I found one kneeling next to me whom I had little expected to find among my neighbours there ; it was Mr. Benjamin Sharpley.

I soon found from the clergyman that Mr. Sharpley's was no mere formal change, nor formal religion. He told me that he was the first in all the good that was done, the kindest, the most generous, the most forward. Though he still attended to his shop, he found time to visit the poor, and to find out their real wants ; he was the friend of the widow and the fatherless, always took orphans as his apprentices, felt a lively interest in the schools, and was now busy building an infant school for the benefit of the parish ; in short, he was as eager and anxious in toiling for others, as he had formerly been in toiling for himself. His way of life was simple in the extreme ; he spent little upon himself ; every thing looked the same in his house as it had done years ago ; in the little parlour next the shop were the same red curtains with black velvet fringe, only faded and turning into a

dingy orange from the wear and tear of twenty years ; there were the same horse-hair mahogany chairs, only at the corners the stuffing was trying to peep through ; the same round glass over the chimney piece, only the gilding had become dull and worn.

Gladdened by the sight of such a change, I sought to become more acquainted with my former neighbour. Many a walk and talk we had on a Sunday afternoon after church, and all his heart seemed to centre upon one thing, a deep settled desire to serve his Saviour, and to be a faithful member of His Church. There was a good deal of reserve about him ; he seemed to dread talking on religious subjects, and always spoke very solemnly ; he shrank from religious talkativeness. As we became more and more intimate, I became curious to know the history of his change ; the clergyman could not tell me ; all he knew was that he had often sought his counsel, and often spoken in tones of deepest sorrow of his former worldly ways. One evening, it was at the close of the day on which the infant school was opened, he was unusually cheerful, and evidently grateful for having been allowed to bring so good a work to an end ; he was also unusually unreserved, and as the evening wore

on, I could not resist telling him the pleasure it gave me to find him spending his time and money in such good works as were likely to bring blessings upon himself and others. At last, as one remark led to another, I hinted at his former life, and expressed my surprise on my return to find him so greatly changed. "Well," he said with an hesitating voice, "as I do not believe you ask me out of idle curiosity, I will tell you the strange and merciful event which led me to repentance for my past great sin of covetousness and worldliness, and which gave me very deep views of the need of preparing for the life to come by the help of God's good Spirit.

"I had been working and slaving harder than usual about Christmas-time ten years ago; I had all my accounts to make up, and I confess with shame, that I stole some hours two Sundays running to spend upon my books of trade.

"On coming to the end of the job, I found to my delight that I had had a most prosperous year, and I absolutely gloated over the figures that told me how rich I was. The labour, however, that I had undergone had fairly worn me out, and when I leaned back on my chair I felt great fatigue, and at last fell into a restless confused slumber, and I then had the following

wonderful dream, which has exercised such importance on my life.

“I dreamt that I was dead, and yet saw every thing that was going on in my house as though I was alive. The day after my death I saw a gig drive up to the door ; two young fellows, my nephews, jumped out and exclaimed, ‘What, is the old fellow really dead?’

“‘Dead as a door-nail, Sir,’ said the old woman who was then my servant.

“‘Well now for the pickings,’ said the elder, ‘what shall we be at first?’

“‘Why first,’ said the younger, ‘let us have something to eat and drink ; where’s the key of the cellar, Sally?’

“‘Here’s the key, Sir ; I’ll go and fetch you something to warm you this cold Christmas weather.’

“Off she went ; but when she was half way down the cellar stairs she seemed to recollect something, and scrambled up into my bed-room where my body was lying ; then she fumbled over the waistcoats and trowsers I had last worn, and ransacked them of all the loose silver they contained. Having done this she hurried again to the cellar, and took out three bottles of my best wine ; one she put away for herself, and the

other two she brought into the parlour. After a jovial feast my nephews began to turn over my goods. ‘Well,’ said the elder, ‘he was an excellent fellow for saving; all the better for us; he grew the crop, and we’ll gather it.’

“ ‘Aye, and spend it too, I hope,’ answered the other, ‘we’ll soon give his money some wheels; it’s been like the green pool in a village, all stagnant; we’ll make it move now. They say he worked hard, got up early, and was’nt in bed till midnight; it was very kind of him; he was an excellent labourer for his heirs; he was a good faithful slave for those who are to come after him. It must have been a great pleasure to him to have toiled so hard for us, and if he could but see us now, it would be a great pleasure to him to see us getting hold of all he scraped together; his was the trouble, ours is the gain. I’m sure we’re much obliged to him.’

“ At this they both laughed aloud.

“ ‘I wonder,’ said the younger, ‘whether he thought to carry away his money; he loved it so, it must have been hard to part; did he think he could pack up his ledgers and his bank-notes, and his gold and his goods? However, it’s no use lining his coffin with bank-notes, or putting a bag of guineas in his hand.’

“ ‘No, indeed, there’s no sending his money after him, and to say the truth I’m not disposed to part with it. He thought himself, I dare say, a very wise and prudent man. To my mind he was a fool, for what has he got?’

“ ‘Why,’ said the younger, ‘I don’t suppose his money does him much good now; he took a deal of labour; however, it’s all the better for us. Just come and look at this ledger, made up to Christmas, I declare; beautifully written; excellently cast up; what hours he must have spent upon it? He didn’t think we were going to pocket the result; well, Mr. Benjamin Sharpley,’ he continued in a mocking tone, ‘let’s see what you made last year; you have been just like a banker’s clerk, lots of money passing through your hands, but precious little for yourself. Let’s see; here’s the last line, £553 2s. 5½d., very pleasant profits last year, and very pleasant pickings; thank you, Mr. Sharpley; you did pretty well last year; you must have worked hard; much good may it do you; we are greatly indebted for having it all copied out so fair; £553 2s. 5½d., what say you to that? We’ll toss up about the three farthings, we can’t divide that.’

“ ‘They then proceeded to look over the shop;

the shutters were closed for sake of decency, but they made Sally fetch a light, and with that they inspected all my stock, searched all the drawers, rummaged every desk, and made themselves masters of the state of my affairs; my banker's book, my account of money in the stocks, all my business letters were in their hands.

“ ‘After all,’ said the elder, as they sat down to a good dinner in the parlour, ‘we must not complain of your slaving, drudging, covetous dogs, as far as we are concerned; it is true they have a dismal life of it themselves, and what becomes of them afterwards it’s better not to think; money is’nt much good beyond, I should guess; this shrewd old fellow has outwitted himself; it appears he’s got nothing in this world and nothing for the next, he has beggared himself by his savings and hoardings. However, he shall have a decent funeral; and as he never gave any thing away here, or did any good that I ever heard of, I suppose after the mob has stared at his coffin, nobody will think any more of Mr. Benjamin Sharpley.’

“ ‘I think we ought to put up a marble slab in the church.’

“ ‘Well, we can do that, and they may read it who like. Of course we shall say he died

“beloved and respected,” or “deeply lamented,” and all that sort of thing. I dare say the stonemason will have a ready-made epitaph.’

“‘O this great ledger,’ exclaimed the elder, lifting up the huge volume, ‘this is at once his monument and epitaph; this would tell the truth if we could but get it nailed against the church wall instead of your marble slab, for I don’t believe he had a thought beyond the debtor and creditor account.’

“At this point the ledger somehow or other slipped from his hands and fell heavily on the floor. I suddenly awoke, and found that by some unconscious movement of my arm I had really shaken the ledger from the table, and the noise had startled me; my dream was at an end; but the impression which it made will, I trust, never be effaced; every word pierced my conscience as with sharp swords; I saw the wretchedness and wickedness of my whole life; all the imaginary speeches of my nephews seemed so full of truth, that I was for a long time doubtful whether after all it was but a dream; they haunted my memory day and night; my shop, my ledger, my stock, all cried out against me that I was covetous; wherever I went in the course of my business, the words of the dream

wrung in my ears ; ‘ too true, too true,’ I would exclaim to myself, ‘ is the picture which I have thus seen of myself ;’ ‘ not a thought beyond the debtor and creditor account,’ I keenly felt was a saying exactly applicable. I looked upon the event as a solemn warning ; I considered my whole mode of living, my ends, my motives ; and I found I was indeed beggaring myself by getting rich, gaining things I could not keep, and losing all that could be kept. I resolved at once to make a great effort to free myself from my sin ; that very night I bent my stubborn knee, and poured such prayers as had never before risen from my soul ; like the poor publican I was indeed conscience-stricken and self-abased. Besides using my own endeavours, I hastened to the clergyman ; I told him plainly of my sin ; I asked his counsel ; I besought him to treat me as a child ; I placed myself under his guidance. As a true ambassador of Christ, as a true pastor and holy friend, he dealt with me ; I owe him, under God, more than I can express ; he led me to search for the true riches of our Saviour’s kingdom ; he helped me in the search ; and now having taken up the cross, I purpose by the aid of the Spirit of grace to devote my whole life to His service, who in

His great undeserved mercy did not cut me off in the midst of my sin. You see before you a poor penitent, a wanderer, a guilty wretch craving for pardon at the foot of the cross, and desiring to be remembered in your prayers. I have to-night been able to speak to you in this manner; I have never revealed this dream before; I shall never speak of it again; I look upon you as a friend indeed, for we walk in the house of God as friends. May we be friends on earth, and friends for ever in heaven."

My poor friend then burst into tears; for a long time he was too much moved to speak. I laid my hand upon his, and suffered him gradually to recover his composure. When he had regained his self-possession, I took up the Bible and read a chapter aloud, as I had no heart to return to common subjects, and it seemed to calm his spirit. When this was ended, he rang the bell, and his apprentices and servants came in to join in family prayer. We all knelt down, and I trust that our souls were that night truly united before the throne of grace. It was then time for me to return home, and after a warm "good-night" I left the house. The memory of that evening remains with me as fresh as ever.

I have continued to meet Mr. Sharpley since,

and have only found more abundant cause to be thankful for the friendship which has sprung up between us. The more deeply I see into his character, the more clearly I see his complete devotion to the Christian's true business ; and though I have never had the same temptations to covetousness, I trust that I have learnt from him a stronger desire to use my worldly means to the glory of God and the relief of my brethren.

DEVOTIONS FOR THE DESOLATE.

O LORD God, Holy Father, be Thou blessed both now and for evermore, because as Thou wilt, so is it done, and what Thou doest is good.

Let Thy servant rejoice in Thee, not in himself, nor in any thing else ; for Thou alone art the true gladness, Thou art my hope and my crown, Thou art my joy and my honour, O Lord.

What hath Thy servant, but what he hath received from Thee, even without any merit of his ?

Thine are all things, both what Thou hast given and what Thou hast made.

I am poor, and in troubles, from my youth, and sometimes my soul is sorrowful even unto tears ; sometimes also it is disturbed within itself by reason of sufferings which hang over me.

I long after the joy of peace, the peace of Thy children I earnestly crave, who are fed by Thee in the light of Thy comfort.

If Thou give peace, if Thou pour into my heart holy joy, the soul of Thy servant shall be full of melody, and shall become devout in Thy praise.

But if Thou withdraw Thyself (as too many

times Thou dost) he will not be able to run the way of Thy commandments ; but rather he will bow his knees, and smite his breast, because it is not now with him as it was in times past, when Thy candle shined upon his head, and under the shadow of Thy wings he was protected from the temptations which assaulted him.

O righteous Father, and ever to be praised, the hour is come that Thy servant is to be proved.

O beloved Father, meet and right it is that in this hour Thy servant should suffer something for Thy sake. It is well that he should be for a little while held cheap, and humbled, and in the sight of men should fail, and be wasted with sufferings and languors ; that he may rise again with Thee in the morning dawn of the new light, and be glorified in heaven.

Holy Father, Thou hast so appointed it, and so wilt have it ; and that is fulfilled which Thyself hast commanded.

For this is a favour to Thy friend, that for love of Thee he may suffer and be afflicted in the world, how often soever, and by whomsoever Thou permittest such trials to befall him.

Without Thy counsel and providence, and without cause, nothing cometh to pass in the earth.

It is good for me, Lord, that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy righteous judgments, and may cast away all haughtiness of heart, and all presumptuousness.

It is profitable for me, that shame hath covered my face, that I may seek to Thee for consolation rather than to men.

I have learned also hereby to dread Thy unsearchable judgments, who afflictest the just with the wicked, though not without equity and justice.

I give Thee thanks, for that Thou hast not spared my sins, but hast worn me down with bitter stripes, inflicting sorrows and sending anxieties upon me within and without.

There is none else under heaven who can comfort me, but Thou only, O Lord my God, the heavenly Physician of souls, who strikest and healest, who bringest down to hell, and bringest back again.

Thy discipline (shall be) over me, and Thy rod itself shall instruct me.

Behold, O beloved Father, I am in Thy hands, I bow myself under the rod of Thy correction.

Strike my back and my neck too, that my crookedness may be conformed to Thy will.

Make me a dutiful and humble disciple of

Thine, (as Thou hast been wont to do me good,) that I may be ready at every beck of Thy divine pleasure.

Unto Thee I commend myself, and all mine to be corrected; it is better to be punished here than hereafter.

Thou knowest all things generally, and also each separately, and there is nothing in man's conscience which can be hidden from Thee.

Before things are done, Thou knowest that they will come to pass, and hast no need that any should teach Thee, or admonish Thee of those things which are being done on the earth.

Thou knowest what is expedient for my spiritual progress, and how greatly tribulation serves to scour off the rust of my sins.

Do with me according to Thy desired good pleasure, and disdain me not for my sinful life, known to none so thoroughly and clearly as to Thee alone.

Grant me, O Lord, to know that which is worth knowing, to love that which is worth loving, to praise that which pleaseth Thee most, to esteem that highly which to Thee is precious, to abhor that which in Thy sight is filthy and unclean.

THE BEAUTY OF CHURCHES.

I ONCE visited the room where the Queen holds her court. Bright and beautiful was the vast chamber ; I felt awed by its nobleness and grandeur, and the feeling of reverence that it raised caused me to move gently about it. The ceiling and the walls were covered with gold and various colours, which were combined with the greatest skill, and gave wonderful richness to the room ; curtains of thick crimson velvet, with broad fringes of gold and golden tassels, hung in rich folds from the golden cornices ; costly pictures adorned the walls ; a magnificent carpet, into which the foot sank as though it were the softest turf, was spread over the floor ; a splendid throne was reared at one end of the room ; large mirrors multiplied by reflection the grandeur of the scene ; and on entering the hall, after passing through some ordinary streets, I seemed to be in a sort of fairy-land ; the whole place was so vast, so grand, so dazzling, so over-laid with splendour, as though all that wealth and skill and taste could

do had been lavished on the presence-chamber of the Queen, that I was quite overpowered. "This is indeed fit for a Queen," I said to myself; "the room tells its own tale; the room teaches us to honour her who is set over the kingdom; one sees at once it is used for no common purpose; it is a queen-like place; it looks right royally and has a royal air; it is not like a barn or a shop or a common house; and if the Queen here holds her court, here sees her subjects, here sits as Queen, is here present to receive her nobles, ambassadors, soldiers, magistrates, and any classes of her people who have a petition to make, it ought not to be like a barn; it ought not to be a bare comfortless cheap white-washed place, but a throne-room, looking like a throne-room. When I again passed into the streets, every thing seemed dingy and plain and common after the grandeur I had just witnessed.

As I wandered on, I at last reached the outskirts of the city, and came to a church that had been built about twenty or thirty years; I observed that the walls were thin; no ornament, no richness was to be seen; every thing seemed done to save expense; cheapness was marked on every part. I could not but think of our

Saviour and His disciples walking round the Temple in Jerusalem, and gazing at the goodly stones with which it was adorned; a feeling of shame and disappointment came over me when I looked at the cheapness and shabbiness of the Christian's House of prayer. "However," I said to myself, "perhaps the inside may be beautiful, and the gifts of the people may have been spent on some striking and costly adornment within." On entering I was pained to see the same signs of cheapness. It was a niggardly-looking, bare, comfortless place; thin white-washed walls; white-washed ceiling; pews painted white; a common-looking table for the altar; a cheap carpet; a stripe of common matting along the aisle. "And this," I said to myself, "is the earthly presence-chamber, the earthly throne-room, of the King of kings and Lord of lords!" The Queen's throne-room with all its cost, all its beauty, was instantly before my mind. How great was the contrast! How bare, how mean the House of God! How splendid, how rich, the house of the servant of the Lord! I felt very sad in heart as I thought upon the difference between the two. If we think it right, as it is, to shew these tokens of honour towards our earthly rulers, and grudge no ex-

pense in giving them rooms fit and suitable to their state and rank, ought we not to shew still greater tokens of honour to His House who is higher than the kings of earth, who condescends to be present in earthly Houses of prayer, and chooses in His infinite mercy to call those Houses His? We deck and adorn the palace; we lavish upon it silver and gold; we enrich and dignify it in all possible ways, that it may be worthy of the Queen; and we do rightly in so doing. But we grudge expense upon the church; we build it cheaply; we refuse it all outward dignity, all inward beauty and richness. Should this be so? Ought we not to rejoice to bestow our gifts, our treasure, the costly things of the world, on the House of God? Ought we not to esteem it a privilege to be allowed to adorn that most holy place into which Christ comes? •

If a man loves his home he tries to make it beautiful and comely; he has his neat garden round about it; he paints and papers it; he furnishes it to the best of his power; he hangs pictures on its wall. The cost, the labour that he spends upon it proves that it has a place in his regard. So, if the House of God had our love, our reverence, our deep regard, we should not be able to resist adorning and beautifying it, making

it as worthy as we can of Him whom we there seek and who calls it His ; it would be an instinct of devout affection and honour ; we should not be able to endure to see it bare and mean, while the houses of men were adorned and beautified ; it would grate upon us, and pain us, and almost anger us.

Let the Queen have her brilliant throne-room ; let the nobles have houses according to their rank ; let gentry, let citizens, let the lower orders also in their way and in proportion to their means give comeliness to their homes ; let us not take down the velvet and the gold from the palace ; or the paint, and paper, and pictures, from humbler rooms ; but let the grandest, richest, most noble, and most beautiful place amongst us be the House of prayer. Let that, like the palace, tell its own tale ; let the goodly stones say, “ we are the best stones ; therefore we are for God ; ” let the goodly timbers say, “ we are of the best and richest offerings of the forest, and therefore we are for God ; ” so of all other parts of the House of God, so of the holy vessels, so of the furniture, all should be the best of the best, because the House is God’s, and He is Lord of all.

While these thoughts were in my mind, I

caught sight of a neighbour passing by the porch, and I hastened to join him.

“You seem sad,” he said; “what is the matter?”

“I grieve to see so mean a building for so great an object; we commonly fit a building for its object: if we build a place for corn, all we care for it is, that it shall be strong and plain, able to keep out wind and weather; we do not have sculptured windows and painted walls; if we build a house for a labourer, it is suited to a labourer’s wants, with neat small rooms, warm and comfortable; if we build a house for a squire or noble, we give it greater size and more ornament; so I should expect to see the church somewhat fitted to its object, and far superior to all other buildings of men, as it is built to the honour and glory of Almighty God.”

“Well,” said my neighbour, “I like simplicity; there is something beautiful in simplicity; none of your paint and varnish, none of your gew-gaws for me.”

“If,” I answered, “you do indeed like simplicity, why do you dispense with it at home? why do you indulge in paint and varnish there? It is strange to like simplicity in church and to dislike it at home: when we consider ourselves, then we

hear nothing of simplicity ; when we consider God's House, then we clamour for it."

"Well," he continued, "give me plain dry walls, and a plain dry roof ; that is the best church I wish to see ; all else is mere waste of money, foolish ornament, superstitious extravagance."

"But pray think," I answered, "of your own house ; why don't you content yourself there with plain walls and a plain roof ? Look at your rooms ; one is pale blue, another pink ; here are beautiful papers on the wall, there a soft carpet of beautiful pattern upon the floor, there curtains of many colours. You have ornaments on your chimney-piece ; your plates and dishes are of all kinds of comely shapes. Why not have white walls, plain white plates, deal chairs, plain curtains ? Why is all this extravagance, all this cost, all this taste, shewn in your house, if you really like plain dry roofs and plain dry walls ? Is it not very strange to hate white walls in your own house, and to like them in God's ?"

"But," he added, "you know it does not matter what the walls are, if we have good hearts and pray in spirit and in truth ; that's the whole matter ; the spirit, Sir, is the thing."

"Yes," I answered, "I know that a cold formal prayer in a most beautiful House of prayer is worth nothing ; but surely the consciousness

that we had spent much on ourselves, and been mean and grudging towards God's House, would hardly fit us to worship in spirit and in truth. If our spirit did indeed rejoice in the privilege of going into God's House to find our Saviour there, that same spirit would prompt us to give vent to our thankfulness, in adorning, in beautifying, the courts of the Lord. Comfortable houses and chill bare cheap churches are not to my mind the sign of a spiritual mind or of a real heart for the things of God, or of real contempt for the things of the world. If a man had a bare plain house, and a rich grand church, I should have some sign, some proof that he loved God with his spirit, and despised the world, that he honoured his Saviour above all things, and thought little of himself. O that men would spend less upon themselves, less on their houses, less on their own comforts, more on the Houses of God in the land ! May the day come when nothing shall be meanly or cheaply done which relates to God, whether it be in the building of churches, or in the relief of the poor, or in any good work to which we put our hands in the name of Christ !”

With these words I bade my friend good bye.

*THE CURATE'S DAUGHTER,
OR THE SACREDNESS OF CHURCHYARDS.*

“NEXT girl! Funeral! What spells funeral?”
These words were addressed by the curate of a country parish to one of the girls in the little school that looked on the churchyard. The word was duly spelt, and then he went on somewhat in this manner.

“And now tell me what a funeral is?”

“A burying, Sir.”

“Yes, and what is a burying?”

“When they carry any one to the grave.”

“And where is the person who is carried to the grave?”

“In the coffin, Sir.”

“Did you ever see any one in his coffin?”

“Yes.”

“Did you like to see him?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Because he was dead.”

“Could you have run about the room and played?”

“No.”

"If the coffin-lid had been put on, could you have laughed, and talked, and jumped over the coffin?"

"No;" (with a look of great horror.)

"What made the people carry the person to the churchyard?" No one answered.

"Why did they not bury him in the garden, or take him to the wood, where he would be quite alone?"

One little girl answered, "they might dig up the garden, Sir."

"Yes, and they might cut down the wood, and make a field of it, might they not?"

"Yes."

"Well then, why did they take him to the churchyard?"

"Because he might not be disturbed, Sir."

"Yes, that is one reason, but suppose the churchyard were not large enough; what should we do?"

"Make it larger, Sir."

"Yes. But should we not build a wall round it, like the other part?"

"Yes."

"And then get the bishop to come and consecrate it, as he did the other day at Newport?"

"Yes."

“ Then would it be the same as other ground ? ”

“ No. ”

“ What would be the difference ? What were you told about that ground. ”

“ That it was sacred. ”

“ Should you go to play in the church ? ”

“ No. ”

“ Why not ? ”

“ Because it is a sacred place. ”

“ Should you play in the churchyard then ? ”

“ No. ”

“ Well then, you see how wicked it is to do as you do every day ; you tell me you would not laugh and play in the room where there was a dead body, and you were quite shocked when I asked you, whether, if the lid were put on the coffin, you would jump over it, and then you tell me that the churchyard is a sacred place ; and yet, because a few feet of mould are laid on the lid of the coffin, you go and jump over it, and laugh, and play ; not only where there is one dead body, but where there are hundreds ; and not in a room which is not sacred, but in the consecrated place, and over the tombstones, many of which have the word ‘ sacred ’ upon them. ” The attention of every child in the little

school was gained, and looks of childish shame sat upon almost every face. And then he went on to say, "I was in a city the other day, my dear children, and I went to see a church in the worst part of it. I mean where the most wicked people live. My friend and myself went down one street, full of low, bad people, and there were wicked persons at their doors talking wicked language, and dirty, ragged children fighting, and screaming, and, I am sorry to say, swearing in the streets, and drunken men reeling along, and the sound of coarse and filthy songs coming from the public houses, and defiling the peaceful evening air. I said to myself, truly there needs not one church, but many here. Well, suddenly we turned out of all this noise into a quiet churchyard, and I seemed at once to have left the world behind me, and to have come indeed into a consecrated place. There were no children playing and screaming about the graves, as I have seen some of you; but the paths were all kept clean, and the grass nicely cut, and there were flowers upon many of the graves, and round the church, and marks of reverent care all through the churchyard. When I saw all this, I uncovered my head, and thanked God inwardly that among those wretched people there were

some holy children and good people who revered the church, and the churchyard, and kept the memory of their departed friends fresh by God's own monuments, the flowers, which call to our minds the death, or rather the sleep, of the seeds. It will be long, I dare say, before I see this in Hadwell churchyard, but I hope you all, my dear children, will try and be more reverent there: and when you play do not choose so sacred and so awful a place."

The seed fell upon good ground; the substance, and in some cases the order of what he had said, was kept and related at home by most of the children, and much was the curate pleased by seeing a more reverent demeanour preserved in the churchyard. This was one point gained, and from time to time, in the catechisings, the subject was alluded to, and the grown-up people, through the children, were taught the reverence due to holy places.

This is all man can do; sow the seed of good, and leave it to God to raise it up when it pleases Him. Clergymen go on preaching, and warning against persisting in some evil course, or neglect of some plain duty, and it often pleases God that they should fall asleep before the fruits of their preaching manifest themselves. And again, as

THE CURATE'S DAUGHTER,

the kingdom of God cometh not by observation, neither do the effects of the king's message. The herald comes, and proclaims his master's will, but he sees not who obeys the proclamation. Doubly blessed then is that clergyman who is not only listened to when he delivers his message, but who is spared to see it acted upon. Yes, even though the first occasion of its being acted upon should be on some great calamity happening to himself, as was the case with the curate of Hadwell.

He had one lovely little girl; the earthly shadow cast by a sainted mother from the skies. At the time referred to at the commencement of my tract, she was about eight years old. She was much the companion of her father, and thus was thoughtful beyond her years, for he was one of those men who feel the holiness as well as the beauty of childhood, and how much is to be learnt of God's revealings from the language of guileless and trusting faith. It was a beautiful sight to see this little maiden stand on the summer afternoons among the rest of the children to be catechised. Her place was generally opposite the window of the south transept, outside of which, or rather almost before the church porch, which was made there, but stretching

its mighty arms to the window, grew a large sycamore tree, the glory of the village, almost of the county. The lights and shadows of this tree played upon her young face, and the villagers, some of them, who fancied that they saw other lights than those of earth there sometimes, used to look with a simple and almost reverential love upon the little child. Then they loved their pastor, and used to look from her face to his, and see the same earnest dark eyes, kindling up at the same time, and at the same subjects, the same pale features, the same strange look. There she stood, Sunday after Sunday, and the village children loved her as much as she loved them, and turned, as naturally as possible, to her, when any question of more than ordinary difficulty was asked, and treasured up her answer, oftentimes more than they did the words of the curate himself.

Her father loved her greatly you may be sure, but not so much as God did, for He took her to heaven, and her father would have kept her upon earth. It was in the autumn that she sickened. Her voice, which was strangely musical, got faint; and a small bright spot burnt upon her cheek, and her eyes grew large and brilliant, and her little plump hand grew thin, and the fingers

tapering, and the palm was hot and felt clammy when you took her hand in yours. When her father first saw these signs, he went into his study and locked the door, and wept bitterly. Long, very long, did this storm of grief continue, for he had no other child, and this was very dear to him ; but at last he subdued it, and said to himself, "This is but what is due to the flesh, be satisfied now, my heart, and give up your darling." Then he knelt and prayed, the more earnestly as he felt his weakness returning, for thankfulness in his affliction, that he might bless God for exalting his darling into a better home, and for not leaving her to defile her baptismal robe with the vanities of earth. This was due to the spirit ; and after having made these sacrifices of resignation, and these thanksgivings, he went and talked calmly with his darling child.

Young as she was, the light of the Spirit shewed her where she was going ; for a short time after, she came in one evening from tending her flowers, panting for breath, and with her face, all save where that bright spot burnt, very pale : and placing herself as was her wont upon a little stool near her father, said, "Papa! in those verses you read to Mr. Coleman the other day, you said,

‘ Place not thy love upon the flowers,
They dwell beneath the sky;
And longing for the sunny hours,
Pine after them, and die.’

“ And you know, papa, you often call me your little lily, and there has been the rough wind and shaken that poor little lily, the last one you know, papa, the one you said was an imperfect blossom, has shaken it all to pieces, and when I went to see it I found the beautiful white flower-leaves scattered up and down, and the golden threads hanging down looking quite useless, and I thought, if I should be like that lily !” Here, overcome by the thought, she threw her arms round her father’s neck, and father and child wept passionately at the thought of parting from each other. But after awhile, the deep voice of the father, albeit broken at times with grief, began to utter sentences which had a strange power over that little one ; “ The grass withereth, the flower fadeth : but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” (Isaiah xl. 8.) “ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” (1 Thess. iv. 14.) “ Suffer little children to come unto Me . . . for of such is the kingdom of God.” (St. Luke xviii. 16.) “ If

any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." (St. Luke xiv. 26.) "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." (St. John xi. 25, 26.) At the first sound of those holy words, her wild grief was hushed, and clasping her little hands tightly, and yet in the attitude of prayer over the bosom of her white frock, she listened, the tears indeed standing in her long eyelashes, but the dark eyes beneath fixed upon her father's with a mingled expression of awe and love, such as we delight to imagine in angels when they worship. Sentence after sentence out of God's holy book did he repeat, till the sobs of both were hushed, and that little one uttered her mother's favourite words, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest." And then father and child began to talk of that dear one who had passed on before them, and it seemed, as the sounds died away in the village, and the grey twilight fell, and the bright stars came out one by one, it seemed that even so they were leaving behind them the things of earth,

and entering into the communion of saints, so soft, so gradual came the change over their spirits.

But I linger over this part of my story, and I cannot help it, for, with such spirits, this, the hour of giving up the dear one, is the time of death. It has no more terrors when this is passed. So was it with the curate of Hadwell and his daughter. But fondly and earnestly did the father strive to furnish this young saint with means of Christian help and comfort: he the more trusted that the Holy Sacrament would be worthily received by so mature though so young a disciple, who had but little known actual sin. Soon, however, very soon, she fell asleep, drooping her pale face upon her father's shoulder, like her favourite lily, whose golden threads still clung to the parent stem; she died like one who lies down to sleep on the eve of a great festival, hoping to be awakened by the sound of rejoicing on the morrow.

And then followed the last solemnities of planting in corruption the seed of incorruption: and the curate came back to his dwelling, with that chastened grief at his heart which the Christian may indulge in: and it was whilst he was striving more earnestly than ever for consolation,

that God sent it to him in the form most acceptable to a clergyman, namely, a proof that his words had not fallen to the ground. His friend Mr. Coleman, who had said the service at his little one's burial, came in, and after offering him the consolation one Christian usually offers another, told him, that after the burial, and as he was leaving the church, he found at the priest's or chancel door, some of the elder school children who had followed his daughter to the grave. "The tears," said Mr. Coleman, "were still wet upon their cheeks; and the girl who addressed me, could scarcely do so for her sobs. She said, that some time ago, you had reproved them for playing in the churchyard, and told them how reverent they ought to be there: and, among other things she said, you told them of a churchyard you had lately visited, where those who loved their friends had planted flowers upon their graves, and kept them blooming all the summer, and neat all the winter. And then they told me how dearly they loved little Ellen, and how they all longed to plant some flowers on the grave, and around it; and begged me to ask your permission before the turf is put on. I said I would do so, but then I asked, how can you be sure that other children or the rude

boys who go through the churchyard, will not pull up the flowers? They all exclaimed almost at once, that everybody loved little Ellen, that no one in the village could think of doing such a thing. And that no one ever came to play in the churchyard now."

It may easily be supposed that permission was given, and before long a glorious white lily lifted its head above the simple cross which marked little Ellen's resting-place, and a white moss-rose drooped its half-hidden buds over her breast, and a beautiful white amaranth was near it, and the laurustinus, the favourite plant of those who look beyond the summer of this life, and others sweet and simple, were there, the lovely violet, and the snowdrop, of course, not excepted. Duly watered, and jealously guarded, we may be sure these flowers were: and each little school-child considered herself responsible for the welfare of this miniature garden. No rose was plucked, no flowers taken away, and when at last some of them bore seed, and they ascertained that they might venture to take this, almost every little garden in the village boasted of a flower from Ellen's grave in the ensuing spring. Then, when the curate saw that the sanctity of the churchyard was duly acknowledged, he ventured to plant

THE CURATE'S DAUGHTER,

some shrubs about it, and to train some roses amidst the ivy on the church, and to sprinkle round the borders of the paths some mignonette seed.

The angel of death came too to the school, and bore away in his bosom one of that little flock. It was a boy, who throughout a long and painful illness, constantly said that he should go and see little Ellen. He was but five years old when he died, and after his burial, the curate, with his own hands, planted the amaranth and the laurustinus upon his grave, and it soon blossomed like a garden. Then the school-mistress, who had been almost a mother to those little ones, and was loved as such by them, she lay down in her last sleep, and the hands of affection decked her grave in the same manner. And now, in that village churchyard, the turf lies soft and green between the graves, and here and there before the tombstones wave bright flowers, and pleasant odours float upon the summer air. The old sycamore still stands, and the golden sunlight struggles among its branches to get to the place where the village children stand to be catechised. And, although it streams through stained glass, and often falls, red, or purple, or richly blue upon their youthful faces, yet it never diverts

their attention from their pastor. Some of those who stood there with little Ellen have gone away to service, and some are living in the village; yet, whenever any of them come near the churchyard, they turn aside to her grave, if not to weep, yet to think on her who lies beneath awaiting her last change. And a fit place is it for the meditations of Christians over their sleeping brethren. Far away towards the rising sun stretches the view over a country richly wooded, and gradually rising. The church, like a huge cross laid reverently down among the tombs, shews here a few grey stones, and there the dark ivy and the brilliant rose. There are now no damp graves, covered with dank grass and weeds, shewing where some relative has been put, perhaps under cold wet dripping eaves or trees, but all are carefully tended and kept free from weeds, neatly bound with osiers, if not covered with flowers. The feet of neighbours and friends are frequent upon the turf, and the language used there partakes generally of the sanctity of the place. Such, reader, are some of our churchyards, really sacred to the memory of those who sleep in them. May all be such!

HINTS FOR KEEPING CHURCHYARDS HOLY.

1. NEVER pass through a churchyard as through common ground. Think within yourself that under those graves lie Christians, awaiting the Day of Judgment. Say a secret prayer that God will raise you up from the death of sin unto a life of righteousness, that when you shall depart this life, you may rest in Him.

2. Teach your children from their earliest years to reverence the churchyard as a holy place, and discourage any childish mirth or playfulness there, much more actual sport. And you will be the better able to do this, if you avoid, as much as you can, all exchange of ordinary civilities, while you are standing on sacred ground.

3. If you have friends or relations lying in the churchyard, make it a religious duty to see that their graves are well cared for. It is a beautiful and appropriate custom to plant flowers on the graves, where it may be done.

4. Be careful always to walk in the proper paths, and not to disfigure the turf by treading where you ought not : but especially recollect, never to put your foot upon a grave, for one who was created in God's image lies beneath.

ON SAYING THE RESPONSES IN CHURCH.

O THAT men would praise God and pray to Him, not only with “a pure heart,” but with “humble voice,” when they go up to the House of God! With godly reverence should the tongue be used; not in loud, boisterous, forward, familiar tones should we express ourselves in the very presence of our Lord; there should be soberness, carefulness of speech, for it is an awful though a blessed thing to speak to God, to utter words in His ears, in His own holy House, words that are to go up into heaven and to be written down in His book.

But if we should take heed to use our tongues with reverence and godly fear at such a time, what shall we say of those who will not or do not use them at all? What shall we say of those who have a voice for the market, a voice for the field or the fireside, a voice for the

world and for worldly things, but no voice for God? What shall we say of those who can speak every where but in Church, and are there as dumb men who cannot speak, nay, as men who there make themselves dumb and will not speak?

It is holy David who says, "I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have." We know that he was not content to lift up his heart in speechless silent praise, but he was wont with his tongue to express with his people the thoughts of his heart; thus did his spirit openly proclaim itself before the Lord; heart and tongue, mind and voice, soul and body, joined together in the act of worship. The voice without the soul, as he well knew, is a mere hollow form; but the soul without the voice in the assembly of the saints performs but a part of worship, an imperfect, defective act.

But look now-a-days at Christian congregations, at Christian worshippers, at men assembled together in Christ's name, in Christ's presence, in His House of Prayer; how mute, how speechless they are; how slow they are to worship with the best member that they have, that member which they use for every thing but for its best concern. How often out of all the number of worshippers we hear no more than a very

little part praying or praising with their voice ; a thin weak body of sound goes up, a few voices faintly represent the whole.

Often one might think a whole congregation had been struck dumb, that their tongues were tied, that the gift of speech had been withdrawn, or that Christians were forbidden to pray or to praise aloud. With one mouth and one mind they do not glorify God ; whatever may be the thoughts of their heart, those thoughts do not fill the tongue with words of thanksgiving or of confession of sin. All is pent up, all hidden within the heart, all utterance choked and stifled ; if there is worship, the whole man does not take part, the soul acts by itself, and God has no honour from the tongue. And yet surely the tongue is for the Lord ; surely the gift of speech is never so well, never so acceptably used as in acts of worship. Surely it cannot please God to give Him only a part of that which is wholly His, to give Him our hearts but to refuse Him our tongues, when both heart and tongue might join together in glorifying Him, when both might be consecrated and hallowed by such united service.

“ Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” so it is said in Holy Scripture,

and in all things we feel this divine saying to be true. What a man greatly feels, what he has at heart, that he is constrained to speak of ; if it is a solemn thing, he speaks solemnly, he is careful of his words ; but still he speaks. Hence it may well be questioned whether after all the spirit is so deeply employed in prayer, when it makes no sign, when it refrains from utterance, when it refuses that mode of expressing itself which has been given it by God. “ I kept silence,” says David, on one occasion, “ yea, even from good words ; but,” he adds, “ it was pain and grief to me ;” it was a hard thing to do ; it was against the grain ; he wanted, he yearned, he longed to speak, because his heart was full. And so is our case now ; if we really come together to pray, and if we really desire and yearn to pray, it is not natural to be mute and speechless ; a full heart would naturally vent itself in words ; words would be its providential vent ; they would come out, they could not be kept back except by violence and strong restraint. Words almost rush out of our lips when our heart is full : we cannot keep our thoughts within ; if we have a strong feeling of joy and thankfulness, we like to declare our thankfulness aloud ; if we have a strong overwhelming sense

of sin, we like to confess our sins aloud with our fellow-sinners ; speech seems a way of relief provided for us by God, whether we greatly sorrow or rejoice. We cannot understand true hearty prayer with other Christians without words.

A silent congregation always strikes me as a lukewarm congregation. I always doubt whether the spirit of prayer is strong among them, when no sound issues from their mouths. There seems to be a dulness of spirit, a coldness, deadness, want of zeal, when men come together to pray and yet say nothing ; it is not like common prayer ; it seems lonely and private after all. Warm hearts would force warm words out of the mouth ; silence betokens want of warmth ; the fervent spirit would so gratefully, so thankfully use the gift of speech, for it would feel eased by the expression of its fervour. Though God knows the heart and the inward fervour of a fervent heart, yet a hearty worshipper would know that as God made the tongue, so He loves the sound of the human voice in the best and holiest of its acts ; he knows that the voice was given for the very purpose of witnessing to God, of holding converse with Him, of making the fellowship in prayer with our fellow-worshippers to be known and felt.

No wonder that men complain of wandering thoughts in Church when they try to pray with sealed lips. The whole service in such a case is chilling, cheerless, dispiriting. No wonder that coldness and deadness steal over our soul. There is no sense of union in prayer, no token of sympathy, no help from others by hearing others pray, no mark of heart joining to heart, nothing to stir us up, to warm us, to kindle the spirit of prayer afresh when it is beginning to flag and tire.

If we go to a Church where the congregation does join with one mouth as well as one mind in glorifying God, our whole heart is stirred within us; we feel that we are with those who are confessing Christ; we catch fervour; we get sustained in our fervour and helped on; the fire within us is hindered from going out; the very sound of praise makes our heart to beat and swell with joy; the very sound of confession of sin helps to humble us. There is something solemn, impressive, affecting in the holy sounds of prayer and praise gushing forth from the souls of Christian men, of a Christian brotherhood, a Christian family assembled in their Father's House; such audible worship spurs the sluggish soul; it gives us heart; it inspires us with a more

lively sense of God's presence, and of the holy work for which we have sought His holy House.

O that congregations would cease to be mute and speechless ! O that they would praise God henceforth with the best member that they have ! O that they would lift up heart and voice, and make the holy Place to sound with the holiest of earthly sounds. This is what God loves to hear and see, praying hearts and praying tongues, not stiff silent tongues refusing to give utterance to the breathings of the soul, nor loud voices like tinkling cymbals hollow and heartless, but true worship both from soul and body, the spirit of man expressing itself by the voice of man, the whole man worshipping God, the whole man uniting in those acts of repentance, of faith, of hope, of love, which bring down the Spirit of grace from heaven, and raise us up to be near our Father in heaven, through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Only consider this ; is not our service of a two-fold kind, the clergy having their part and the people theirs ? There are portions which the priest takes by himself ; there are portions which the people take by themselves ; there are portions where priest and people join together. Now what would you say if the clergyman some-

times was silent when it was his part to speak aloud, if he left the people to themselves and gave no response? Suppose in the Psalms the clerk and people took their verse and the clergyman held his tongue when his turn came, what would be said? Put the case the other way, what can be said of the people, if they are silent when they are directed to speak aloud? Surely in such a case it is a spoilt, broken service. The wheels of the chariot on one side are off, and it goes heavily like Pharaoh's. Remember the words, "O Lord, open Thou our lips, and our mouth shall shew forth Thy praise."

DO YOU SING IN CHURCH?

“Is any merry,” says St. James, “let him sing psalms.” Music is God’s good gift; and when the hearts of Christian men are full of holy joy and their spirits are ready to overflow, let them break forth into singing; let them say with David, “O come let us sing unto the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.” Let sweet psalms be poured forth from willing hearts and willing throats; let the spirit of man thus find a vent and channel for its joy; for the singing of psalms is the best use of the gift of music, and it is an honouring of God with His own sweet gifts.

How warmly does St. Paul speak upon this matter when he says to the Ephesians, and to us through them, “Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts

to the Lord ; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The sweetest sound in the whole earth is the sound of psalms and spiritual songs. They lift up the heart ; they fill the ear, and through the passages of the ear pass on and touch the soul ; they raise the spirit and light it up with a holy fire ; they lift it upward as upon unseen wings ; when it is getting dull and cold, they give it life and godly heat ; they make it somewhat to understand angels' joy ; and as the sound of many voices swells into one vast harmony, we feel the joyfulness, the very luxury of praise.

. It is pleasant to hear a Christian family thus close the day ; for music has a binding influence, and through united voices, hearts are united too. But above all, excellent is music amongst that larger family, that larger household of Christ, I mean the assembly of the Church in the holy House of God ; there is the true place for spiritual songs, for the melody of holy hymns ; all to whom God has in any way given the power are there bound to "sing unto the Lord" in the presence of the Lord ; and when from the great body of the congregation whose devout delight it is to sing to God, we hear some grand

old psalm burst forth, the souls of the worshippers are stirred within them and they feel God to be very near.

But alas, where is the congregation that sings at all? We shift our duties, our privileges upon others ; we resign to a feeble number that which it is the part of the mass of us to do ; we hand over to a few people in the gallery, or a few people in the choir, the whole duty and privilege of singing God's praise ; we are too lazy and unconcerned to take our part in that which should be a general act ; and when the clergyman exhorts us to " sing to the praise and glory of God " such and such a hymn, the greater portion of us hold our tongues ; and thus a thin shallow stream of holy music is all that rises from the congregation instead of a full, rushing, glorious tide.

Now ought this so to be? Should the worst music and the weakest be found in the Church, the best, and fullest, and richest in the places of the world? Are we to hear plenty of music breaking forth from public houses in every part, plenty of music in the tradesman's and farmer's parlours, plenty of music in the drawing-rooms of the rich, plenty of music at balls, revels, concerts, theatres, taverns, all manner of worldly places, whether for

the high or the low ; and then when we enter the House of God, when we draw near to our most blessed Saviour, are we to hear nothing or little there, no full rich outbursts of praise, but a scanty meagre sound from a scanty choir in the midst of a mute and silent congregation.

Ought this so to be? Is this to use all our faculties to the glory of God? Where are all those who sing at home? Where are the throats which are apt and skilful in worldly songs, which are constantly in use to please the ears of others or themselves? Music breaks forth on every side throughout the week ; music of some sort or other sweeps upon one's ear ; wherever we turn our steps, music is to be heard ; in back streets, in wide thoroughfares, in fine houses, in poor lodgings, in public places, in private places. But where, O where is the music of the House of God? Where the singers of the sanctuary? Where the minstrels of the holy place? Where the full tide of holy song rolling in glorious echoes through aisles and chancels to sweeten the air breathed in the temple of the Lord ! O sad poverty of music in such a place ! O sad grudging and withholding of one of God's choice gifts from God Himself ! O miserably " scant measure " of that service of song which the saints

of old rejoiced to give, and which God delights to receive from the members of His Church on earth ! O melancholy, most reproachful truth, that the music of the world is strong, and good, and everywhere to be had, that Church music is faint, and poor, and scarce.

But let us not content ourselves with saying that few people sing in Church ; bring the matter home. Let me ask, “Do *you* sing?” That is the point. If indeed you should say, “I cannot sing ; I have neither voice nor ear ; I know not one tune from another ; and though I like hearing others, I only put others out when I sing myself ;” in such a case you have of course a good excuse. God has withheld the power, as He is sometimes wont to do ; and we may be sure that He will not expect you to do that for which He has not given you the power. Where silence is not from unwillingness or lazy unconcern it is without fault ; it would only disturb the congregation, and jar and grate upon the ear, if you were to attempt that for which God has not fitted you. In your case, you must make melody with your heart ; your heart must have its hymn ; yours must be inward music, an inward singing of the soul, which is sweet to the ear of God.

DO YOU SING IN CHURCH ?

But such is not the common case. There are but few who have not enough of ear and voice to join in psalms and hymns, especially if they practise and improve themselves. And hence, speaking as to one gifted with common powers, I ask again, "Do you sing in Church?" If you can and yet do not, I pray you to begin ; let not false shame hinder you, or false bashfulness ; fix your whole heart upon God, and you will not think of man or of man's opinion. One person will embolden another ; if you begin, perhaps your neighbour will follow, and his neighbour will take courage ; so will the fire run on. It is a grievous thing to see the power of singing muffled, so to speak, in Church.

It is true, perhaps, that you have no great skill in singing ; but why not give what skill you have, and why not try to improve ? It is not waste time to prepare the hymns desired for Church, and to go them over until they are well learnt. Of course knowledge and skill, and beauty of tone and goodness of ear, can all be improved ; those things are worth improving where the glory of God is concerned. Certainly in some places it is hard to get instruction, and then all we can do is to do our best ; but in many places the clergyman is most thankful to

DO YOU SING IN CHURCH ?

gather together those who wish to improve themselves in singing, for God's glory, and to secure them good instruction.

It will indeed be a good day when the congregation takes a more active part in the service altogether, and I trust that time is coming ; it will be a good day when the people cease to make proxies of the clerk or of the choir, and when they do their own part themselves instead of leaving it to others ; we cannot really do God's work by proxy or by deputy ; to sing and give praise is a holy and blessed work laid on us by God. Each man is answerable to God for the use of all his powers and all his gifts. Every thing we have can be desecrated and debased ; every thing we have may be buried and shut up like unused goods ; every thing we have may be consecrated, hallowed, sanctified, by a Christian and holy use.

Begin then to hallow your voice, to hallow the gift of music, which cannot have been given for mere purposes of worldly pleasure or worldly gain. Give not music over to the world ; bring it into the temple ; devote it to the Lord ; lift up your voice in holy song ; let the House of prayer echo with sweet sounds of praise ; let all the people join together in praising and blessing

DO YOU SING IN CHURCH ?

God ; let one voice draw forth another ; let the many streams form into one ; let the family of Christ assembled in their heavenly Father's earthly House make melody unto the Lord ; and let the well-trained choir lead the rest ; from very reverence, let all strive to pour forth the best and sweetest tones ; above all let nothing be done out of vainglory, or for show, or carelessly ; but let the soul, full of love towards God, give motion to the tongue, so that you sing with the voice and sing with the understanding also, not sending forth the voice while the spirit takes no part, nor yet being content to let the soul have her inward hymns if the voice has power to utter them aloud.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

THE UNMARRIED WIFE.

**THE SIN AND FOLLY OF THOSE WHO LIVE TOGETHER AS
MAN AND WIFE, WITHOUT BEING MAN AND WIFE.**

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.—*Heb. xiii. 4.*

“**THERE** they come ;” said Hannah Mason, as she rose hastily from a chair on which she had just seated herself, and ran to the window,—“poor folks ; how they are cut up !” The next moment her hand was on the door-latch, and before the party who had attracted her notice had had time to knock or to make enquiry, the door was opened and they were bidden to come in.

They were a sorrowful party indeed. Hannah had heard them before she saw them : for they had come sobbing along the street with that slow heavy pace, which a sad heart seems to require to keep time with it. As they reached the door, the Church bell began to toll, and its mournful sound spread the tidings through the village that the Coroner’s inquest was over.

Hannah had but a few minutes before re-

turned from the inquest, where she had had to attend as a witness ; and the party which had arrived at her house were the nearest relatives of a young woman who lay dead in the room above that which she was sitting, and to enquire into whose death the inquest had been called. 'They were an elderly woman whose shrunken features, wasted form, and feeble step, told that she was above seventy, a younger woman, and a man. The elder woman was the mother, the younger the sister, and the man the brother of the deceased. They sat down and for some moments were unable to speak for tears.

At length the younger woman turned to a man who was sitting by the fire-place, his arms crossed, his hat on and slouched over his eyes, though it could not hide the embarrassed and sullen look which his countenance wore: "O John," she said, "what were you thinking of, to bring my poor sister away from home?"

"It was her will to come as much as mine," he answered, and in a tone which seemed to forbid any more questions. None of the party seemed disposed to ask more. And presently on Hannah Mason's inquiring whether they would not like to see the corpse, they left the room and went upstairs.

The deceased had come away from her home, about twenty-five miles distant, in company with the man whom I have just mentioned, four or five weeks before. His own home was in another part of the country; but he had been at work on a railway then forming near the village in which she lived. This led to their acquaintance. They did not marry: but it was arranged that he should seek work elsewhere, and that she should leave her home and live with him all the same as if she were his wife. Accordingly they came on to Wincot, and they obtained lodgings at Hannah Mason's, passing themselves off for man and wife.

The young woman was in a bad state of health when she came. The night after she left her home they had spent in a hovel, there being no room for them in a public-house by the road side where they had intended to lodge. This had greatly aggravated a cough which she had had upon her for some time; and her health kept growing worse from day to day. Still she made little complaint, but contrived to get about and do what she had to do, though with increasing difficulty.

One morning before it was light the man knocked at Hannah Mason's bedroom door, and asked her to come and see his wife, as he called

her, for he was afraid she was dead. His fears were too well founded. She had died in the night, and the jury, in the inquest which was just concluded, had given their verdict that she had died by the visitation of God. So far the man with whom she had lived was freed from the risk of having to answer before a human judge, as he would have had to do had there been reason to suspect that she had come by her death unfairly. But both he and she have another account to settle: and it is the consideration of this account that has induced me to put these lines together, that I may, if possible, reach the consciences of some who may be tempted to pursue the same course as he and this poor young woman pursued, and which in her case was cut short so suddenly and so fearfully.

As regards the man in question, nothing appeared to be farther from his mind than the thought of any such account. Neither penitence for his sin, nor sorrow for the death of her who had been his partner in guilt, nor pity for her distressed relatives, seemed to affect him in the slightest degree. At the inquest he gave his statement of what had taken place with the most perfect unconcern: and when at its close, a shilling was paid to him, as one of the witnesses,

in compensation for the time spent in attendance, he coolly asked whether that was all he was to have. At the funeral he was in such a state of drunkenness that he could not follow the corpse to the grave, but was obliged to be left behind in the very house from which the poor young woman who had given up her family, her friends, her good name, and her conscience, for his sake, was being borne away to her new and mournful home.

Perhaps a case of such extreme heartlessness is rarely to be met with. But it is the tendency of the sin of fornication, in all its shades, as much as of any sin in the whole catalogue of vices, to harden the heart, and make it selfish, and dead to every right feeling.

I say "of the sin of fornication:" for do not think that such connections cease to be fornication, and cease to be sinful, just because the parties, instead of going promiscuously with whomsoever they list, have made a promise to each other that they will keep themselves to each other, all the same as if they were man and wife.

God, Who has put those desires within us which make man and woman dependant upon one another, has not left us to gratify them as we will. The objects for which He has put them within us, namely, the building up of new

families, and the preservation and increase of the human race, are too sacred and too important. He has appointed marriage, that therein He may bind together as one the man and woman, who are to become the founders of a new family and the parents of children, by a bond so strong and lasting, that nothing short of death may separate them. He knows our hearts too well to leave a union, which is of such vast consequence to the well-being of mankind, to depend for its continuance, upon the liking which the parties may continue to have for each other, or even upon any promise less solemn and less binding than that by which they pledge themselves in marriage.

It is true, we read in the Old Testament of connexions of the kind we speak of, and that without any special mark of disapproval. They were permitted for a time, as our Lord says in a very similar case, because of the hardness of men's hearts ; but from the beginning it was not so. (Matt. xix. 8.) The very first time that mention is made of woman in the Bible, that mention is accompanied by the mention of marriage. The manner in which the first woman was formed, namely, out of the side of the first man, is assigned as the reason why "a man" shall "leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave

unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.” (Gen. ii. 24.) And these very expressions, the leaving of father and mother, and being joined to his wife, and becoming one flesh with her, plainly point to a union of a far closer, stronger, more lasting description, than a connexion which has no other security for its continuance than a simple promise which the parties may have made to each other. In the New Testament we find no other connexion recognised as lawful between man and woman but that of marriage only. “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled,” says the Apostle, “but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,” (Heb. xiii. 4;) which implies that God acknowledges but one way in which a man and a woman may lawfully be connected together, namely, through marriage. All other ways come under the head of whoredom or adultery, according as one or both of the parties are single or already married. And in accordance with this the rule which the Apostle gives in another place is, “Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” (1 Cor. vii. 2.) And once married, our Lord forbids the husband and wife to separate, except on one ground, namely where adultery has been committed by one of them. (Matt. xix. 9.)

Marriage is a solemn covenant between the

parties married ; indeed one of the most solemn covenants which it is possible for one person to enter into with another. And it is for this reason, as well as for the high honour which the Bible has put upon it, in using it to signify the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church, that the Church has thought good to make the marriage service a religious service, so that the parties who come to be married plight their vows to each other in God's house, in God's presence, and before the congregation assembled, calling upon God both to witness the vows which they make to one another, and to give them grace to keep them, and receiving the blessing of God's minister, and in that an assurance of God's own blessing upon the new state of life, into which they are entering.

The reason why the connexion between the man and the woman should be permitted on no other footing than that of marriage is a reason full of merciful consideration, both for society in general, and for the individuals concerned in particular.

1. It is full of merciful consideration for society in general. For suppose for a moment that marriage were no longer looked upon as necessary, and that, instead of it, connexions were ordinarily formed without any other security for their con-

tinuance than the liking which the parties might continue to entertain for each other, or some promise which they might have made to each other : what a frail security in either case ? And if so, what a frail security that families would not in many instances be broken up, and the children of such families deprived of the care of one or the other of their parents. Home would no longer be the place it now is, either to parents or children,—a place where all are bound together by common interests ; a place in which the generation, who in a few years, are to be the men and women of the country, are trained by those who are deeply concerned in their welfare, for the station which they are to fill. The whole character of society would be changed, and changed very materially for the worse.

2. And if it is the interest of society at large that a man and woman should not be permitted to live together as husband and wife unless they be really husband and wife, it is most plainly the interest of the individuals themselves. For, as I have said already, what is there, if they are not married, to bind them to each other ? what security has the woman, that the man, if he grows tired of the connexion, will not leave her, with perhaps a family of children to provide for ? And what security has the man, that the woman, if she

grows tired of the connexion, will not leave him, either taking her children with her,—his as well as hers,—or else forsaking both him and them, and refusing to do a mother's part by them?

It is, then, a merciful and kind consideration which has ordained that when a man and a woman desire to live together as husband and wife, they should really and truly be husband and wife, bound to each other for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death does part them, by a bond, which neither man's laws nor God's laws allow to be broken.

If this does not weigh with the man, one would think that it could not fail to do so with the woman, who, as being the weaker of the two, has the more need to look around for all the security she can have.

Yes, I say, young women, you should ponder well the step you are going to take before you trust yourself and all that you ought to hold dear to you, to a man who is bound to you by no tie whatever besides his liking or his convenience, or perhaps a promise, which, if either of these happens to fail, he may break as easily and with as little concern as you would break a piece of thread. What security have you that, if either of these fails, he will not desert you with your character gone, your friends estranged from you,

and possibly a family of children to provide for? and even if he does not desert you, yet the fear of his doing so will make you, if a family of children springs up, more and more dependant upon him, and more and more his slave. Each child that is born, instead of being a fresh bond of affection between you, will only be an additional link in the fetters by which you are chained to him and to your sinful course.

These, I say, are considerations which might well make both parties pause before they form a connexion from which they have so little to hope, so much to fear, even as regards the present world. But remember, there is another world after this. Even supposing that the parties do keep their liking for each other, and do abide by the promise which they may have made to each other, they will still have to answer to God for the sin of setting light by His ordinance. And God, Who has declared that "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but that whore-mongers and adulterers He will judge," will judge them with unsparing severity at the last day.

Be warned then in time, young man or young woman, whoever you are, who are tempted to form such a connexion as that which I have been speaking of. Is it well, think you, to expose yourself thus lightly to the wrath of Almighty

God? Is it a fit return to make for all His goodness to you thus to run counter to His laws? Have you ever considered the great love which He has shewn towards you, in that He has given His Son to be your Saviour? Have you ever considered that you are not your own, that you have been baptized, and by baptism solemnly bound over to be God's servant, while at the same time God has as solemnly pledged Himself to give you heaven and all its joys, if only you remain faithful to Him unto death? Is it right that you should disregard your obligations, and scorn His promises? If you desire to live as a husband, or as a wife, with the person on whom you have set your heart, why should you not really be husband or wife, in the sight both of God and man? If you mean what is lawful and honourable, why do you not do what is lawful and honourable? If you have no such meaning, then depend upon it, whether you regard this world or the next, it is ten thousand times safer, happier, wiser, not to do what you mean. Be married if you will: for "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled:" but if you will not, have no connexion whatsoever with persons of the other sex, for "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

***THOUGHTS OF CHRISTIAN COMFORT
FOR THE BLIND.***

LET me speak to you, my brother in Christ, through the voice of the friend or neighbour who in brotherly love now reads these words in your ears.

The hand of God has closed your eyes ; He has folded the lids over them, so that you cannot see ; He has shut out the light, and your whole life is as it were one long night. Day and night pass over you, and it is all the same, whether it be night or day, bright sunshine or thick darkness. You cannot see what goes on ; the world is a sealed book ; it is hidden in mists. 'The green fields, the blue sky, the waving woods, the yellow corn-fields, the beautiful flowers, the bright rivers, the vast awful sea, the glittering stars, the soft moonlight, all these things are hidden from you ; so also are all the works of man's device, pictures, books, houses, works of art, palaces,

villages, grand towns; and more than all, the faces of friends and kindred, children's forms, kind looks, kind eyes, kind smiles. Doubtless you have often longed to have your sight; and as children have played upon your knees, as good friends have talked with you, you have yearned to see them, you have felt sad and out of heart; your loss of sight has been grief and pain to you; you have wished to be like other men; you have keenly felt your loss.

Now it is but natural that you should sometimes thus keenly feel your loss. It is beyond doubt a heavy trial to live on from year to year, and never to see either the grand or the beautiful or the pleasant things which are in the world, and of which your friends continually speak. When other people have been talking of what they have seen, you must often have felt lonely and sad; few persons perhaps enter into your trial, or can understand all you have to go through; the desire to see must often be very strong; it is not easy for those who can see to put themselves into your place or to know how great your trial is. Your whole earthly life must be more lonely, more dreary than that of other men. We should indeed feel for you, and pray God to give you comfort, and to make up

in other ways for that which He has withheld from you.

But after all, there is a bright side in your affliction; there is a very bright side in all that God does; and a Christian, a member of Christ's Church, may hear God speaking comfortably to him in the midst of his trial, whether he be maimed, halt, blind, or deaf; in God's dealings there are bright things for the blind to see, and music for the deaf to hear; the blind may read words of mercy written on the discerning heart; the deaf may hear sounds of love in the most bitter visitations of God.

Now let me, in Christ's name, whose we are, lead you beside the waters of comfort, that you may consider your affliction in a Christian way, and turn it to good account by making it a help, not a hindrance, to your salvation.

And first of all, is it not a comfort to feel that it is from God, from God too, who is now our Father through Jesus Christ? A Father's hand is on you, the hand of love. As a member of Christ's Church you are afflicted by Him who loves, and chastens where He loves. Point this blessed text to yourself, "Whom the Lord loveth He 'chasteneth.'" When we can say of any trial, "it is from the Lord," we can derive

instant comfort ; for in all earthly trials we are sure that love is at work. It is true that in all afflictions we see the fruits of sin ; we feel that we are of Adam's family, a fallen sinful race ; but is there not good to be got from feeling the bitterness which sin has brought ? For as he who is bitten of a serpent, flies to the healing leaves and the medicine for his wound, so we, when we feel the bite of sin, of " the old serpent," and are ourselves suffering from sin, are urged to fly in our time of anguish to Him who came " with healing on His wings," and has power to cure the serpent's poisonous bite. Though doubtless your blindness, like all other fleshly ailments, is the fruit of sin, you need not think that it is of necessity an angry judgment on your personal sin, as though you were marked out beyond other men for vengeance ; you may remember what your Saviour said, when He was asked concerning a blind man, " Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind ? " you have not to consider whether you have personally sinned more or less than your neighbours ; you have simply to say to yourself, " Behold I am suffering because of sin ; I have the sign in me that I am of a sinful race, that God has

shewn the cursedness of sin and punished it by bringing so many ailments into the world." And you may go on to say, "I know as a Christian, that this affliction comes from One, who, while He hates sin, yet loves me and all mankind; who gives at once in my want of sight a proof of His hatred of sin and His love for our souls; He thus desires to make me hate sin and forsake it to the utmost of my power by His grace; He wishes to purify me by this affliction that I may love Him and yield myself wholly to His blessed will."

Is not this loss of sight, as is every trial laid on you by God, a portion of Christ's cross? You are not only suffering a part of the punishment of the first Adam, but you are partaking of the sufferings of the second man, "the Lord from heaven." As a sufferer, you are a fellow-sufferer with Christ; you have a part of the burden of Christ's cross, that you may have a part in His glory; all suffering draws souls to Christ; with iron chains He now binds us to Himself; with thorns He now plaits our brows, that we may be bound to Him for ever with bands of love, and be crowned by Him with everlasting joy. Christ's hand is between the world and you; the shadow of His hand is on your eye and darkens

it ; He it is who puts you to this trial, that you may be more entirely His, that He may make you taste of His cup of trial, that He may snatch you from the world and cut you off from it for Himself. O see the love of Christ ! O look to this fountain of comfort ! Lift up your heart ! Heed not the loss of the sun or of the world, if Christ the true light is drawing you more and more within the circle of His light. Take your blindness as a portion of that daily cross by which faith is proved, and kiss the heavenly hand which blinds you now, that you may hereafter see Him as He is, and rejoice with Him eternally.

Nor is it hard to see signs of this love of Christ in your particular kind of trial. Consider how many temptations you are freed from, which flash before those who have their sight ; how many sights there are which decoy men into sin ; how many are led into sin by dress and gay clothing ; many by trinkets and ornaments, and other luxuries ; many by lands and houses ; many by the fair faces of those who lure them into lusts. O who can count the multitude of tempters and temptations which meet the eye of man as he walks through life ? O how often might we wish men blind and unable to see,

when we behold the things of the world, the things coming before their eyes, drawing them towards hell and blinding them to the things of God. Blessed would be your affliction to many souls who covet what they see, who lust after what they see, whose eyes are full of adultery, whose eyes wander to forbidden objects of desire.

Merciful then is your want of sight, which saves you from so many temptations, which hides so many tempters, which shuts out so many gay baits and dazzling snares of the soul ; merciful is the thick veil which is drawn down over your eyes, and which conceals the world from you. In this sense, your loss is gain ; in this sense you may bless God for putting out of your way so many temptations, which cause other men to fall and make shipwreck of their faith.

And not only are the visible things of the world, which are such snares to men, removed from you, but as the present world is shut out, so the invisible things of the world to come are brought more near to you. As this world is hidden, the other is opened ; as you cannot, in one sense, walk by sight, you have the stronger call to walk by faith ; as the eye of your body cannot see the bright and beautiful things of earth, so the eye of your soul lighted by Christ's

light, should see by faith the brighter, the more beautiful, the more glorious things of heaven ; heaven should be all the more the object of your inward sight ; the very darkness of the world should lead you to long for the light of heaven ; you are less distracted, less hindered than other men in your contemplation of the promised glory of the saints ; for you have not a host of worldly sights coming in the way and dividing your thoughts and meeting you at every turn. What matters it to you what you put on, or wherewithal you are clothed ? What matters it to you whether you have a fine house and large rooms, or a small one with small rooms ? What matters it to you whether the shops are full of tempting wares or empty ? See then, I pray you, how much of mercy there is in an affliction that lessens your temptations, and see how much of comfort the blind Christian can find.

Consider also for your comfort the love and pity which our blessed Saviour shewed to those who had your affliction in the course of His earthly life. You have abundant proofs of His care and compassion to the blind. Call to mind that often did blind men cry to Christ for their cure, and they were cured ; call to mind what St. Luke says in his Gospel, that “unto

many who were blind He gave sight ;” call to mind blind Bartimeus whom the followers of Christ wished to drive away, but our Lord called him, and had pity on him, and restored his sight.

It is true that you cannot now look for a miraculous cure in your own case ; but do not think that Christ’s love is therefore the less. He gave sight to those blind men, not only for their own sake, but for yours, for the sake of all who in after times should read of His acts of love. Though you may continue blind to the day of your death, yet He tells you in those miracles that He has care and thought for you ; and while He healed a few, He comforts all who are deprived of sight.

Remember also that this affliction is only for a time. If you are a faithful member of Christ’s Church, and give yourself up to Him, will not the time soon be here when you will see plain ? Soon will “the light of the perfect day” break ; soon will the blind who have served Christ on earth see Christ face to face in heaven ; soon will the film be taken from their eyes ; soon will their eyes be opened ; soon will they be gazing, not on houses and streets and flowers and fields here, but on the glories of Christ’s kingdom, on the bright things of that eternal home which

our Saviour has purchased by His blood, on the river of life and on the tree of life, on the gates of the eternal city which are as pearls, on the streets which are of "pure gold, as it were, transparent glass." Think of that blessed day; think of the recompence of faith; think of the bliss which the patient servant of Christ will reach; think of the shortness of your trial; this fading world will soon pass away; what you may wish to see here will soon be burnt up; all will come to an end; the end is hastening on; your want of sight will not be a long loss; in a few years at best, the keenest, strongest eyes will have ceased to look upon the world. Never mind the world; care not to see it; see heavenly things by faith; have light within your soul; brighten the inward man; purify yourself by God's grace, and use for your purifying all the means of grace within your reach; hear the Word of God more diligently; ponder it in your mind; learn holy sayings by heart, and write them on the table of your heart, and read them with your heart; offer up constant prayers; receive continually the blessed Sacrament of Christ's body and blood. In all these ways draw near God; in all these ways turn your blindness to good account, remembering that

promise, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Only be pure and holy, and your blindness will soon be turned into the most perfect light.

DEVOTION.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, who in Thy mercy hast afflicted me, I pray Thee to give me grace to discern and confess Thy love in my affliction. Thou hast shut mine eyes upon this deceiving, tempting world; Thou hast hidden from me many sights which might have led my soul astray, and caused me to offend. Teach me then to feel Thy goodness towards me; and whensoever in my weakness I am tempted to murmur and repine, lead me by Thy Holy Spirit to consider what great things Thou hast done and purposed for my soul through this loss of sight. Give me patience and resignation; forgive all my impatience; grant that I may take this my blindness as a portion of that cross which is laid on all true disciples. Enable me to profit by this present loss; and as I cannot

gaze outwardly upon the world, enlighten the inner man, that by faith I may gaze inwardly on heavenly things, and endeavour more and more to see Him who is invisible, even Thee, my God. O heavenly Father, grant, I pray Thee, that all earthly trials may lift my soul from earth to heaven, and make me to desire a better country, where there will be no need of the sun, and whereof the Lord will be the light. Hear me, O God, for Thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ.

CHURCH OR MARKET?

MR. MILTON, the clergyman of Darnley, is now sitting in the study of his parsonage; it is Sunday evening; a book lies open on the table by his side which he has just been reading; his eye is fixed on the fire, and a sad sorrowful look clouds his face.

Now I will tell you the thoughts that are passing in Mr. Milton's mind. If he were to think aloud, you would find him talking to himself in some such way as this, "O that my flock had less heart for market and more heart for Church! O that they would labour less for the meat that perisheth, and more for that meat which endureth for ever, which our Lord offers them, which He presses upon them, which He even beseeches them to accept! O that they hungered for heavenly things, and would give even half the heart to get to heaven, which they

now give to getting on in the world ! As Saturday is for market, and Sunday is for Church, I see too plainly which they care for most, for I see market attended best. Should I pitch my pulpit in the market-place and preach there, there should I catch the largest congregation ; there should I find the multitude of my people ; there should I lay hold of many worshippers of the world who have forgotten and despised their God ; thither I see the lame and the rheumatic, the weakly and the infirm, creeping and crawling on, without murmuring or complaint ; but when I speak to them of Church, all their pains and aches and weaknesses suddenly rise to their remembrance, and are said to unfit them for such a walk. O that they had David's longing to hasten into the courts of the Lord ! for a willing heart heals many an ache, and cuts many a long road short, and smooths down many a hill ; while an unwilling heart turns short roads into long, hills into mountains, slight pains into grievous torments, little obstacles into huge hindrances.

“ Alas, alas, the spirit of the world is strong among my flock ; it grieves me to the heart to see marketing preferred to praying, the shop or the stall preferred to Church, the world preferred

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to God, and the perishing things of this life to the eternal things of heaven. I could speak, like St. Paul, 'even weeping,' when I see the body slaved for, the soul despised ; the flesh provided for, the soul left bare and naked ; butter and eggs, and clothes and corn, thought more of, and more esteemed than all the glories and all the pleasures of Christ's kingdom. I could speak 'even weeping,' when I see eager anxious marketing, slack cold unwilling Church-going ; when I see so many feet crowding, pressing, hurrying to the places where men buy and barter, so few feet moving towards the blessed place where we talk with God, where we meet with our Lord, where Christ is in the midst of us, where we get gifts from above, gifts of the Holy Ghost, pardon of sin, heavenly banquets, and heavenly food.

“ Many there are who would not miss a market for the world ; week after week I see them trudging on ; nothing hinders them ; through rough weather or smooth, through storm and sunshine, heavy rains and sharp frost, thick, muddy roads, and dreary mists, on they plod. But when Sunday comes, all this order, all this eagerness, all this braving of weather, is at an end ; then a shower of rain, or thick mud, or a twinge

of rheumatism, or any little ailment of body locks them in the house ; there is always an excuse at hand, an excuse for me, when I speak of Church, an excuse for themselves, when their conscience with a plain word tells them they should go up to the House of God. Were I to compare men's marketings with their Church-goings, there would be light weight in one scale and a heavy weight in the other. Where there is no heart for the things of God, men easily coin excuses for neglecting God's House ; they easily patch them up ; yes, with the weakest, most thread-bare and tattered excuses, they try to hide their neglect. Then I hear of clothes not being good enough, of a slight cough being a bad cough, of the want of a good seat in Church, of draughts and cold, of weak limbs, of children who cannot be left. On market days the children are left ; the cough passes off ; the cold and draughts in the market-place are made light of ; the crippled limbs manage a long walk ; a seat in a rough jolting cart is highly prized.

“On Saturday last, for instance, I saw old James Dobson hobbling into the town with his basket under his arm ; but where was he to-day ? I saw Betsy Mason wending her way along the same road, her five children left with

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some neighbours, or running their risk of fire, but where was she to-day? I saw Susan Clarke on the same road walking at a brisk pace, but when I speak to her of Church, she always calls herself a 'weak ailing body,' and wishes 'she knew a day's health,' and 'the last time she went to Church she thought she never should have got back.' A long, long list might I go through of diligent marketers who are bad Church-goers; it makes my heart ache as I think over their diligence, their zeal in worldly things, their backwardness, their coldness in the things of God.

"O what fearful hurt are all such men doing to their own souls! What heaps of fuel are they piling up which one day will be set on fire and burn them for ever! What great gifts of grace are they despising now for which they will one day yearn! What bitter repentings there will be, what strong terrible remorse, when, on the day of Christ's judgment, they are forced to meet Him to whom on earth they would not go, who once invited them to His earthly House and they refused, who once called them and they would not come, who once pressed them to heavenly feasts, and they turned away! What fearful sorrow there will be for all these despised

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means of grace, for the despised prayers, the despised Word of God, the despised counsels of Christ's ministers, the despised presence of God in the House of prayer, the despised Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood! Then they will see the madness of their love for the world, the madness of their contempt of the rich things of the Church; then they will ask themselves in bitterness of spirit, 'What have we got of all our marketings, all our toils and slavings, all our eager journeys to the places of the world? What have we not lost through our slackness, our lukewarmness, our contempt of the House of God?' Then they will ask themselves in an upbraiding tone, 'What have become of all we bought and sold, of all the bargains we drove so eagerly, of all our hoardings and scrapings, of all our sharp dealings, of all our purchases? O that we had loved the Church above the market! O that we had loved heavenly above earthly things! O that we had trodden the way to the House of God with hungering hearts and eager steps! O that we had drawn near to our Saviour, and only minded earthly things as far as was needful for our support! O what wretched excuses did we piece and patch together to screen our neglect from ourselves! and now they are rent in twain

and torn asunder, and we see that we were lovers of the world and not lovers of God, with all the wrath of God about to be revealed on our guilty heads.'

"Thus, then, will the souls of all who now despise God, break forth in awful self-condemnation when judgment comes, unless God gives them time and grace to repent. May God, indeed, of His great mercy have pity on the wandering worldly souls who now slight the House of prayer, the blessed treasure-house of grace! May God have pity on the erring sheep of my flock whose whole hearts are bent on earthly things, whose whole life is for the world, who turn their backs on all mention of death and judgment to come, and Christ's second coming, who are all for buying and selling, for eating and drinking, for studying and pushing on their worldly interest! May God shew them their sins while they are on earth, and open their eyes to the fearfulness of their state! It is not that it is wrong to market, but wrong to love market more than Church. I see the faithful ones of my flock diligent in their worldly business, and going to buy what they have need of; but these love the House of prayer, these trudge to that blessed place through rough weather and

smooth, through storm and sunshine, oftentimes even risking health through their holy longing to draw near to God, often refusing to bide at home, even when there has been a real and just excuse. Most merciful Father, have mercy on the worldly-minded, the cold-hearted, the men busy only for the world, and turn them from their worldly ways by the power of the Holy Ghost ! Let them not perish in their sins ; rouse them, O Lord ; quicken them ; give them a new heart and a new spirit ; shake them from these worldly slumbers ; draw them to Thine earthly House that they may not lose the heavenly House. Have mercy on them, O my God, for Jesus Christ's sake."

Before Mr. Milton uttered these last words, he had risen from his chair and thrown himself on his knees ; earnestly did he pray for his people, for he greatly feared lest many should be lost. Are there not many Mr. Miltons, and many people besides his, who love market more than Church, and are oftener in the market than in God's House ?

TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD.

WHEN St. Paul tells the Ephesians (Ephes. iv. 22—25) that Christ requires of us to “put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” and to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,” and then goes on to explain and illustrate this general statement, by particular instances in both respects, the first evil habit which he bids us put off is lying, and the first good habit which he bids us put on is truth.

And there is great reason why truth should thus be placed in the fore-front of Christian graces ; because on it depends the genuineness and reality of all the rest. Even love itself, which draws after it and ensures the fulfilment of whatsoever duties we owe both to God and man, is but as a piece of base coin without it. It is not made of the right metal.

Lying, as St. Paul's expression implies, clings so closely to our old nature, that it might seem a part of it. Every one must have noticed the disposition there is in children to tell lies, almost as soon as they can speak ; for though born again in baptism, their old nature still has power within them. And in heathen countries, where men have been left to the working of their own hearts, it is well known that lying is a most prevailing vice, and people practise it without shame and without restraint. And it is to be feared that there is a large amount of it in Christian lands, and among those too, who are far from being thought to walk very much otherwise than Christians ought to walk.

For it is to be observed there are many forms of lying. .

1. There is the downright, unscrupulous, full-grown lie, when a man roundly declares as true what he knows to be untrue, or when he denies what he knows to be true. Of the first kind was Gehazi's first lie (see 2 Kings v.) when he ran after Naaman the Syrian, and told him that two young men of the sons of the prophets had just come to his master, and that his master had sent him to ask Naaman to give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments ; every

word of which was false. And of the second kind was Gehazi's second lie, which he told to conceal the former, assuring his master, with smooth plausible respectfulness, when he asked him where he had been, "thy servant went no whither." It pleased God to inflict a signal punishment upon the author of these lies, that He might let men see, by Gehazi's example, in what light He regards lying in all instances. Though He may not in all, or even in most instances, punish at the time, yet He will surely punish one day, unless those who have been guilty repent, and seek forgiveness through Christ, and shew that they have truly repented and sincerely sought forgiveness; yea, so sought as to have found; by forsaking their old, deceitful, lying courses, and walking warily in the ways of sincerity and truth.

The punishment of Ananias and Sapphira (see Acts v.) served the same purpose as that of Gehazi. It was an awful warning held forth in the sight of all men of the hatred with which God regards lying, and of the severity with which He will punish it at the last day, however He may in many instances suffer it to go unpunished now.

2. The lies which Ananias and Sapphira told.

were of a more artful, specious description, than Gehazi's lie : a description, which is much more common among persons who wish to maintain a fair character as religious people than the former. They had sold some land; and Ananias had brought part of the money obtained for it to the Apostles, pretending that it was the whole. There was no obligation upon them to sell the land at all, and when they had sold it, there was no obligation upon them to bring the money to the Apostles. But many did so in the fervency of their love and zeal ; and they wished to have the credit, without the reality, of being as fervent and zealous as others. Herein then was Ananias's deceit : he brought a part, pretending that it was the whole : and perhaps he was artful enough to avoid telling a direct lie, leaving the Apostles to gather indirectly from what they saw and heard, that what he brought was the whole and not a part only. Whether it was so or not, this is a very common way of lying, with people whose consciences would be startled by a downright falsehood. They will keep back something which ought to be told in order to a full and fair view of the matter, or they will give an evasive shifting answer, such as may serve to throw a person off the scent, and contrive that he shall rather

arrive by his own reasoning at the conclusion they wish to lead him to, than bring him to it themselves in direct words. But it is a lie equally, whether they deceive by a barefaced falsehood, or whether they go about by artful means to lead the person they have to do with to deceive himself. And it is hard to say which lie is the most hateful, for the one is aggravated by impudence, the other by subtlety and craft.

Whatever was the nature of Ananias' lie, St. Peter's question obliged his wife, who had concerted the whole matter with her husband, to give it a definite shape. "Tell me," he asked her, "whether ye sold the land for so much? and she said, Yea, for so much." And it was true, but not the whole truth. They had sold it for the sum which St. Peter named, because indeed they had sold it for more. And perhaps she was wicked and foolish enough to think that she answered St. Peter's question sufficiently by telling him what was true as far as it went, though only a part of the truth. Whether she thought so or not, it is a principle on which numbers act without scruple. Sapphira received the same dreadful punishment as her husband, and God's judgment upon them is left on record, as was said before, that we may not beguile ourselves with

the vain hope that God does not regard whether men speak the truth or not, even though, in many instances, He may suffer lying to go unpunished for a season.

3. A third form of lying, though one very closely connected with the last mentioned, consists in giving a false colouring to what is related. The substance and ground-work may be true, but it is so garnished and decked out with little circumstances which are not true, while others, which are material to be known, are slurred over, that it is no longer like the same thing. Thus, in relating a story in which they bear a part themselves, people will keep back circumstances which are to their own disadvantage, while possibly, at the same time, they will make no scruple of bringing out into very full prominence, and much more than truth admits, others which are to their neighbour's disadvantage. And moreover, motives are assigned for their conduct, which, in reality, had no weight with them. And thus, though what they say is true in the main, yet the actual impression produced by it, if people take them at their word, is far enough from being true, or at all like the truth.

Insincerity of this kind is very common, and almost all society is leavened with it. Some

men practise it out of vanity, and because they think to set themselves off by giving every thing connected with themselves the appearance of being extraordinary and worthy of notice ; and others seem to do it from scarcely any assignable motive, unless it be an innate preference of what is imaginary to what is real, of what is false to what is true. Whatever be the motive, they allow themselves in this way of speaking without compunction, because they mean no harm to any one by it, nor do they do any harm that they are aware of. Yet even in its most harmless form we must remember that insincerity is contrary to that simple, plain, straight-forward, unpretending course, which it becomes those to pursue, who profess themselves the followers of Him who calls Himself emphatically **THE TRUTH**, (John xiv. 6,) and whose grand aim through life should be to approve themselves in the sight of the God of truth.

It is, indeed, very much to be observed what great pains are taken in Scripture to put honour on this grace of sincerity by the stress laid upon the word truth. God is called the “God of truth,” (Ps. xxxi. 5 ;) the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth,” (John xvi. 13 ;) Christ is called “**THE TRUTH** ;” the Gospel also is called “the truth,” (1 Tim. ii. 4 ;) the Church is

called "the pillar and ground of the truth," (1 Tim. iii. 15 ;) and Christians are described as those who are "of the truth," (John xviii. 37,) and "obey the truth," (Gal. iii. 1.) Are not these very plain intimations to us how it behoves us to love the truth, and to speak the truth, and to let unfeigned sincerity pervade all our words and all our actions, so that we may not even wish to seem otherwise than we really are? We cannot deceive God, and what good will it do us to deceive men, even though our aim be no more than to make them think more highly of us than we deserve. The disguise will likely enough be discovered even here, for the "lying tongue is but for a moment," (Prov. xii. 19 ;) and if it is, it will sink our character at least as much as we thought to have raised it. But if not, it will surely be discovered in that great day when all disguises shall be torn aside, and every man must stand forth as he is, with nothing else to set him off than those graces which he really possesses, and which God has wrought in him by His Holy Spirit.

4. I have been led on insensibly to what is not a distinct kind of lying from that which I set out with speaking of when I began the last head, but rather one particular form under which

that kind shews itself; I mean hypocrisy, that is, the putting on the show of religion where there is not the reality, or pretending to a greater degree of religion than we have. "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord," (2 Kings x. 16,) said Jehu to Jehonadab the son of Rechab, when all the zeal he had was for his own advancement, and the destruction of those who were likely to stand in his way. How often do men put that down to the score of religious motive, which springs from selfishness, or pride, or vanity, or some other carnal affection which they would be ashamed to own!

Hypocrisy has both its grosser, and its subtler and more refined forms. Sometimes it is neither more nor less than the deliberate putting on the appearance of religion, with the full consciousness that the reality is wanting, designedly, as a cloak of covetousness or ambition, or to further some other worldly end; and it often happens in such cases, that they who begin by deceiving or attempting to deceive others, come at last to deceive themselves, and to believe their own lie, that is, to believe they are the religious persons they set out by pretending to be. This is the most extreme form of all, and it is of the coarsest and most revolting kind, and such as

one would hope there are not many examples of in the same age, though some ages have been much more productive of it than others. This would seem to have been the case in this country during the Commonwealth, and for some years immediately preceding it. It was followed, as might have been expected, by a flood of open licentiousness and infidelity, men running from one extreme into the opposite. Short of this, however, there is a vast variety of shades and degrees ; men affecting to be thought religious when they are not, or more religious than they are, and for this end, often, unconsciously perhaps, making use of words, or outward gestures, or tones of voice, all of which are unreal, and not the true expression of their inward feelings and affections.

Now certainly if insincerity is odious and hateful when it is found in matters of a merely secular, worldly character, how much more so is it when it mixes itself in what belongs to religion ! What a poor, vain, empty thing is it to be thought better of than we really deserve, while He who is our Judge, and whose opinion alone is of real account, sees our hearts and knows our true state ! No disguise can be of any avail to hide us from Him ; we may pass our base coin pos-

sibly among our fellow men, but it will have no currency with God.

5. As it is the temptation of some men to make a profession of religion which they have not, so is it of others, and indeed may be of the same men under other circumstances, to conceal or deny the religion which they have; which is another form of lying. In the first ages of Christianity, when persecution was let loose against the Church, it was often as much as a man's liberty or life was worth, to be known as one of Christ's followers; yet even at such a risk, it was the bounden duty of every Christian to confess his Lord. To shrink from doing so would have been to subject himself to the far more fearful alternative of being disowned by Christ before God and His holy angels at the day of judgment.

Our trial is not quite the same as that of the early Christians, but it has much in common with it. If we are no longer liable to be tempted to deny Christ, yet we are, to deny portions of Christ's truth; if we are no longer liable to be tempted to disown the name of Christians, yet we are, to disown the reality. A man may find himself in the company of those who scoff at this or the other article of his religion, which he has

been taught to look upon as a portion of that sacred deposit which Christ committed to His Church to guard ; and he may be induced by the fear of ridicule, or the desire of standing well in the opinion of those around him, to sit in silence while it is attacked, or even to join in decrying it. What is this but to lie against the truth, or at least to make oneself a partaker of the sin of those who do so? Or again, though to call himself a Christian, in a Christian land, subjects a man to no risk or inconvenience, yet to lead a thoroughly conscientious Christian life, to frame his conduct, not by the standard of those among whom he lives, but by the standard of God's word ; to pray and read the Scriptures, for instance, in private, while some of those who live in the same house with him neglect their duty in these respects ; to worship God in his family, calling his children and his servants around him, day by day, to offer up their common offering of prayer and praise to their common God, while in many of the families in his neighbourhood the sound of family prayer is never heard ; to be constant at Church, while perhaps numbers of those around him go to the meeting-house, and express their pity for him, possibly, that he is not enlightened enough

or conscientious enough to join them; to be regular in his attendance at the Lord's Supper, when, perhaps, many of those who ordinarily come up to God's House with him, turn their backs upon that holy Sacrament; to declare his disapprobation, either by grave, sorrowful silence, or by express words, if, at any time, an oath, or an indecent expression, is used in his presence; these, and such as these, may often place a man in painful and trying circumstances. And it will require no small measure of Christian sincerity and Christian courage to go straightforward, (like Daniel when he persevered in his accustomed devotions, notwithstanding the king's decree,) seeking only to approve himself in the sight of God, without regarding what may be said or thought of him by man: yet to do otherwise, to be ashamed or afraid to serve God, and to have it known that we serve Him, is neither more nor less than to deny the truth.

These then are some of the forms under which lying shews itself. And it behoves us as Christians to avoid these, and every other description of this hateful vice; according to the Apostle's exhortation, putting off lying, and speaking every man truth with his neighbour; aiming constantly at sincerity, straight-forwardness, and plain deal-

ing, and being content to be thought what we are, or, if we would be *thought* better, seeking to *be* better, that we may deserve to be thought so; and on the other hand not daring out of fear or shame to deny our religion, but frankly and openly avowing ourselves Christ's servants, be the consequences what they may.

And if we would avoid insincerity and maintain truth, we must avoid whatsoever leads to the one, and undermines the other. In many instances lies are but secondary sins; they are resorted to in the hope of concealing other sins, which have gone before, just as Gehazi's second lie was resorted to, to conceal his covetousness. We must be careful therefore to avoid whatever would ask to be concealed; whatever we should justly blush and be ashamed to own. If there be any thing which we durst not acknowledge if done, let us not dare to do it.

Let parents too take heed to discountenance from the first every shape and form of lying in their children. Never overlook a lie, nor any thing that makes the slightest approach to it; but train your children up from their earliest years to love and speak the truth; and that you may the more successfully do so, see that they never hear you speak other than the truth even in

your most unguarded moments ; and to quicken you in your zeal for truth both in yourselves and in them, remember that truth is the basis and ground-work on which all society rests. If people cannot trust one another, they can have no union with each other, nor any substantial and abiding benefit from each other. And as it is the basis and ground-work of society, so is it likewise the turning-point in religion. What is religion without sincerity? a mere name ; an empty profession ; a mockery and insult to God.

But after all, our utmost pains and the clearest and strongest conviction of the importance of truth will avail us little, unless the love of truth be implanted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Christian character is not to be formed, whether in this or in any other of its features, by our own unassisted efforts, be they never so great. We must indeed use all possible efforts, but we must use them in dependance on the Holy Spirit's aid, and with continual, fervent prayer for that aid in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He that so strives, cannot fail to be successful.

A PRAYER.

O God, the God of truth, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule my heart, grafting therein the love of truth, and making me in all my thoughts, and words, and actions, to study, speak, and follow, truth, for His sake who is THE TRUTH, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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FAMILY PRAYER.

ONE dark night when I was riding slowly home, my way led me past two cottages, which in the distance glittered like stars in the lane, from the bright fires that were upon the hearth. When I drew near them they looked so warm and bright and comfortable that I could not help looking in to see what the cottagers were about in such cheerful homes. In the one I saw that they were just going to bed; a tall girl was putting some tea things into a cupboard, and then nodding "good night" to her father and mother, slouched lazily up stairs; the father stood humming a tune by the fire, which was occasionally interrupted by a long yawn; while his wife bustled about to see that the door was fast and all things safe, and then hurried to bed, beckoning to her husband to put out the candle that was swealing down to the socket. After a few minutes' delay he left the fire and moved slowly towards the stairs.

In the next house there was a different scene. A labourer was just rising from a chair by the fireside, and a little boy, who seemed to have

been reading to his father, jumped up and carefully closed his book. The labourer's wife with her two girls put aside their work; while the elder of the girls went to a shelf and brought down a large Bible and Prayer-book which she gave into her father's hands. After reading a few verses in a solemn and reverent way he carefully closed the book; and on his taking up the Prayer-book the whole family knelt down, one sweet rosy-cheeked boy putting his little fat hands together with a grave look as he nestled close to his mother's side. When the cottager began the Lord's Prayer, all joined aloud; and as the sound of their voices reached me in the dark lane, the manly voice of the father blending with the sweet tones of the children, my heart was touched; I inwardly joined with these rustic worshippers, and lifted up my soul with them; then as I saw all rise from their knees and affectionately wish each other "good night," I rode on, thanking God for the sight of such a home.

Now take these two cottages and consider the way in which those cottagers closed the day. Tell me on which was God's blessing most likely to rest that night? Which acted most like Christians, most like a family confessing Christ, most

FAMILY PRAYER.

like those who watch for their Lord and prepare themselves for the life to come? In the one house they did not tie their souls together in family prayer; each one went alone to bed, and perhaps poured forth by his bedside a lonely prayer; but they did not join in prayer; they did not unite as one man in that act of faith; they did not pray together; they did not warm and sanctify family affections by united prayer; there was not a family act of faith. In the other, heart joined with heart; they all loved God; they all confessed Christ to be their Lord; they all therefore joined together in prayer as if they had but one heart. Father, mother, children, all sent up their souls together as if they were one. Surely it must have been an acceptable act in God's sight. Does He not like to see families praying together? Why has He made us live together in families? Why has He put us under one roof? Are we to eat and drink together, to sit and talk together round our firesides, yet are we not to pray together?

Family prayer is one true way to preserve true family love; it is a holy bond by which we are bound to God and to each other. When the day closes over our heads, when we are about to lie down in sleep, when we consider

that we may then wish "good night" for ever in this world and not wake again, is it not right for us, as Christians, to kneel down together before we part for the night, to pray for pardon for ourselves and our kindred round us, to commit ourselves and our kindred into God's most merciful hands in the Name of His dear Son? So also when we meet in the morning, should we not kneel down together and meet in prayer? Should we not, as a family, bless God for our safety through the night, ask for grace that we may all serve God and wear our daily cross as good soldiers of Jesus Christ? It is indeed a good and holy thing to have family prayer. It is the true way to get family blessings, to increase family love, and to have the peace of God in our homes. The mother becomes more motherly when she prays with her children, the father more fatherly, the wife more wifelike. Our earthly home becomes more like a heavenly house on earth. As our prayers go up, the Spirit of love comes down, and they who delight to pray together on earth may hope to live together in heaven, praising and blessing God for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE RIGHT WAY OF READING SCRIPTURE.

THERE is good reason to fear that with all men's talking about the Bible in these days, the real use of it is but little. Perhaps we prize it more as a possession than as a spiritual instrument. Just as some men value a great victory because it is a victory, and not because it brings peace and safety, so, it may be, we are proud of having the Bible and of being able to read it, rather than glad in the light of its holy truths, and full of love and hope and faith for the blessed promises which are in it. Certainly there is an inclination in us to despise our forefathers and the members of other Churches who have not received the same power over the Scriptures, and to be proud of our own liberty and knowledge, without enquiring whether the Bible is in our hearts as well as in our hands, and whether we truly read it, and know and feel its holy meaning.

Let us think then, if we have not been accustomed to read our Bibles regularly, what a treasure we have suffered to lie hid all the years of our lives. With medicine at hand for our sin-sick souls we have not healed them; with light to enlighten our darkness, with a chart to guide us on our voyage, we have gone on in peril of rock and shoal; and it is of God's most undeserved mercy alone that we have not made shipwreck of our souls.

If we would feel how great a blessing Holy Scripture is, we have but to remember how the saints of God have ever valued it. David in trouble takes the words of Lot into his mouth, and all the people of God ever since have deepened their penitence, comforted themselves in grief, kindled their love and hope in the words of the Psalmist. Our Saviour Himself in His first temptation by sentences of Scripture vanquished Satan; our Saviour Himself hanging upon the cross, offered that sacrifice of Himself not without the psalm of His passion. (Ps. xxii.) Nay, but we need only think what the Scriptures are, to know all we need know of their unspeakable value; sure they are no other, nothing less, than God's own words, God speaking to us. Shall we not hear Him? Shall we

THE RIGHT WAY OF READING SCRIPTURE.

run abroad for reports, and eagerly drink in the last news, the newest story of man's sins and follies, but be deaf to God calling to us from our Bibles, day by day? Rather with holy Samuel let us say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth;" with David, "The law of Thy mouth is dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver." (Ps. cxix. 72.) Perish every book ever written, let history, and chart, and all the writings of men, be thrown aside, neglected, forgotten, destroyed; but this be ever ours, to hear the gracious words of the Lord speaking to our inmost souls all which those souls need to guide them on earth and lead them to heaven.

But, it may be that many of us have read the Scriptures regularly; and then the question is, with what profit? When Moses came down after speaking with God, his face shone so that the people could not look on him. The three Apostles, when they had been with God and heard His voice, would have built tabernacles on the mount for the prophets and for their Lord, and remained there for ever. When have our faces been so lightened? when have our hearts been thus dead to the world below through the reading of the Scriptures? It does indeed appear to those who watch for souls, that the Bible is in these days,

like other means of grace, less understood than talked of, less known and really used than even good men are at all aware.

There must be then some great faults in our way of reading Holy Scripture. It cannot be that the Bible is empty of grace for us, but we in some way are not ready to receive it, or read amiss.

1. One of the chief faults that hinder us is want of reverence. If men really felt the Bible to be the Word of God, that is to say, constantly and always felt it to be their Creator's voice, they could never do many things which are now, alas ! very common. Never then would they make jests on names, or histories, or any thing else strictly belonging to the Bible. They would have a holy fear of God ; for God's Book, as well as for God Himself. Never then could they allow their children to toss the Scriptures carelessly down, to lay them open upon their tables, to place vessels of food upon them ; but they would have their Bibles kept clean and fair, and if their means allowed, beautifully covered with grave and solemn ornaments, and would fix a certain place in which they should always rest when unused, safe, undisturbed, respected. And never, if men had this holy fear of God's Word, as belonging to God, would they take up their Bibles carelessly,

and after talking or thinking of other things straightway begin to read without one solemn thought ; nor in the midst of reading would they stop, and jest or speak of worldly matters, nor after finishing pass straightway into light and common talking, as if they had been doing nothing, as if they had not been near God nor God near them.

And indeed such are not near God, although God was near ready to speak with them of that which was worth to them more than gold or precious stones. For sacred things are to us what we make them. Many people touched Christ in the days of His humiliation upon earth, and gained nothing. Many heard Him and spake to Him to no profit. The Church, the Font, the Altar, are all full of holy words to our souls when we draw near them, if we are ready to hear ; but, if not, they are silent. The things of heaven come to the door of the heart, but we must open it.

If then we would profit by the Scriptures we must approach them reverently, feeling that they are the voice of God, the voice of God which prophets, and Apostles, and martyrs, which Christ Himself died to deliver into our hands.

A holy man who established an order of

preachers would have his followers read a chapter daily upon their knees.

A great saint long at rest, speaks thus of a good book, and how much more then of the Scriptures.

“So take a holy book into thy hands to read, as just Simeon took the child Jesus into his arms to hold and embrace Him: and after thou hast done reading, close the book, and give thanks for every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, that thou hast found in the Lord’s field a hid treasure.”

2. We need a strong desire, an earnest longing and serious seeking after God’s holy truth and holy will. Humility and desire are the two conditions of receiving grace, earnest approach and reverent approach. “Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only.” And therefore together with humiliation, with a remembrance of what we are who are about to hear, and who He is to whom we would listen, we must join an earnest longing, like that of those who followed Christ into the wilderness, like that of those who hung upon His lips. (St. Luke xix. 48.) This desire is exercised in prayer. If we have time and opportunity, we should pray upon our knees before we

begin to study God's words ; but at least lift up a few earnest inward thoughts, a short desire of the heart, such as these :

“ Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”

“ Lord, 'Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

“ O may I hear the voice of the Son of God and live.”

Now when we read our Bibles we should have in view these two great objects, to advance in doctrine and in practice ; we should seek God's truth and God's will, what He would have us to believe, what He would have us do.

I. Doctrine.

Many fall into a great and dangerous mistake at the very beginning ; they set out with a wrong view, the mistaken view of thinking that they are discovering, finding out for the first time, the doctrine of Christ. The Christian faith was delivered once for all to the saints. (St. Jude 3.) It cannot be added to, for he is accursed who adds. (Gal. i. 9 ; Rev. xxii. 19.) It cannot be lost, for the Church would then be lost, and the gates of hell would then have prevailed against her. (St. Matt. xvi. 18.) If then we search as discoverers, we cease to be followers and disciples, and since the faith has been already taught us by the Church, if we have found some-

thing more or something different, we have gone astray, we are following our own inventions. Place a man where many roads meet, and tell him to go to a certain city, but not saying which road leads to that city, and then the man is a discoverer; he is obliged to compare the roads and search; and perhaps he will choose the wrong and never reach the place he seeks; but shew him the road, and then he follows it and arrives in safety; but should he seek to be a discoverer and a finder, and so tries the other ways, he is lost.

How do we seek doctrine in the Bible and yet not seek it? Even thus. We seek to find that which we already believe. We already have the faith; in Scripture we seek for the ground of that faith, its proof, its fountain springs; and assuredly we shall find them if we seek aright. He who is at the mouth of a river does not seek for that river, but traces the stream to its source: so we in the wide stream of the faith which has flowed on deep and clear for ages, desire not to discover truth, but reverently trace back the faith which we hold to its source, and find the word of life springing up in the paradise of God's Word, and flowing forth into all the garden full of life and joy.

2. And as we are not discoverers, so are we not judges. In matters which are not determined by the Creeds we are not at liberty to choose and refuse as we will. Children must be taught, not teach, and the Church is our mother. We are not learned, nor wise, nor good enough to set up our judgment against her; and even if we were, we should be like children rebuking their parents. We must take our Prayer-Books in hand as well as our Bibles, if we would escape falling into mistakes about doctrines. That is to say, we must remember the doctrines of the Prayer-Book whilst we read. 'The Communion Service will explain to us the doctrine of one sacrament, the Baptismal Service of another, and so forth. Let us be learners not judges, the safest and by far the happiest course.

3. We must all search with a right intention, not that we may become clever disputers, nor shine in talking with others, but only to know what God in His goodness is willing to teach. He who thinks to know any thing of the doctrine of the lowly Jesus, whilst he desires to seem learned and clever by talking before men, can never really know Jesus. It is indeed necessary sometimes to argue and defend our faith against attacks, but it is a sad necessity. We should be

sorry for it, and never seek it. For what are we that we should argue about God's truth, as if it were a thing in our hands to do what we will with? And what, if in arguing we should lose all that we would gain from the truth, all which can cause God to love us, our humility and our charity?

More has been said now upon these three points, because in these days men are very wrong upon them. They approach the doctrine of the Bible in a worldly spirit, as if they were searching into some common matter in a common way. Alas, the very state of heart in which they seek ensures that they shall never find.

Therefore we must take heed and be on our guard. We must remember that there is but one doctrine in God's Word, however men may differ about it. Only one doctrine can possibly be right, and this right doctrine is God's truth, God's Word, the way of life, Christ as He is in His Word to be believed, to be possessed by His people.

O how sad, O how fearful, if through our fault we should miss this one truth of God. Therefore let us take heed. "What does it profit thee," says the saint before mentioned, "to dis-

cuss high things about the Trinity, if you lack humility, and so displease the Trinity? I had rather feel compunction than know how to describe it.

“If you were to know the whole Bible outwardly, and the words of all philosophers: what would it all profit without the love and grace of God.”

II. Practice.

We read for practice as well as knowledge, nay for practice chiefly, and every article of faith should teach us a duty, or it is lost upon us. The Incarnation should make us humble: the Crucifixion penitent: the Resurrection holy: the Ascension heavenly. But we must not only apply the faith thus to practice, for we find in the Bible matter belonging straightway and simply to duty, such as holy example, and holy commandment and counsel.

1. We must read then with the serious intention of applying what we find to our own lives. As the eye of a good picture looks on us in every part of the room, so we must consider the Bible as always looking at us and speaking to us. As the strangers from all parts all heard the Apostles in their own tongues, so God's Word, though the letters change not, speaks variously

and suitably to every person, to every circumstance of a person's life, speaks to them of their duties and privileges, in joy and sorrow, in danger and safety, in sickness or in health, in life or in death. Be it ours to hear and follow; continually asking, What says this Word to me? What does the example of this saint teach me? How can I follow Christ in this which He did, in this which He said?

2. And that we may be able so to read and learn, we must before all things have an honest conscience, a clear true intention to do at once whatever we learn to be our duty. As the Jews could not understand the Scriptures concerning Christ's coming, because their hearts were not ready for Christ's coming, so neither can we ever learn without an honest heart.

HINTS FOR THE SICK.

I.

W. "O, SIR, I am so glad you are come."

C. "I would have come sooner, my friend, but I did not hear of your illness until this morning."

W. "Why no, Sir, for I have only taken to my bed these two days, last Sunday week I was at church, but I shall be there no more I am afraid."

C. "I am very sorry to hear that you think there is cause to fear that; why do you think so?"

W. "The doctor gives me small hopes of getting about again. I believe I am dying, and O, Sir, I am afraid to die. It is an awful thing to die; so very dreadful it seems to me."

C. "Tell me what makes you afraid to die? Is any sin pressing upon your heart? If so, I pray you to confess it; 'if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'"

W. "No particular sin seems to press upon me, Sir, but the sin of my life; all the whole sins of my life rise up now, and I must soon give an

account of them all ; there seem so many that I don't remember now ; many things I thought were no harm, now seem very wicked."

C. " You have come often to the Holy Communion, you have confessed your sins there, and you now feel that the remembrance of them is grievous unto you."

W. " Yes, Sir, I have been often there, but I have not lived my life every day as if I had been there."

C. " But you ' do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these your misdoings.' "

W. " O yes, Sir, I do repent, I wish I could better say earnestly repent, I don't seem to do that. O how different sin looks when we are dying to what it does in other days, it seems so much worse, as if it was all against God. But I seem to think that even if my sins were all forgiven, that I should still be afraid to die."

C. " What would make you so afraid, if sin were forgiven ?"

W. " I can't exactly tell why, Sir, it seems altogether something dreadful, something that I don't understand."

C. " I think I can tell you partly what you mean ; it all seems mysterious, and awful, and strange, a state you have no idea of ; you have

seen people die, and have wished that they could just tell you where they were going, and what they were passing through, but no one could, and the loneliness of death made it terrible to you ; has it not been so ?”

W. “ O yes, Sir, I have watched one and another go, and have thought, if I could but once know what they were passing through, it would be easier to me when my turn came.”

C. “ O yes, who has not felt that ? but though it is true that each one must die alone, as far as their fellow-creatures are concerned, that they must bid them all farewell, yet when they do so they will ‘not be alone,’ their ‘Redeemer is mighty,’ and He will pass through death with each one of His children, He will be their companion, He will carry each one in His arms ; He knows where to lead you, for He has passed through death ; He knows every step of the way ; it is not a lonesome path for you, for He will be with you, saying unto you, ‘Fear not, for I am with thee ; be not afraid, for I am thy God ; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.’ Be sure, dear sister, that you will never be left alone for one moment. He who has borne with you all your life through, loves you too well to leave you

then; He who created you will not give up 'the work of His hands' then. He will say, 'Be not afraid, for I am thy God.' No man is able to pluck you out of His hands. Do not let Satan tempt you with undue fears, but 'have faith in God.' "

W. "These are very comforting words, Sir, but I have always thought that the Church thinks it a very dreadful thing to die: there are all those words about God 'being justly displeased with us for our sins,' and especially those words, 'Suffer us not at our last hour through any pains of death to fall from Thee.' When I have heard these words at church they have always terrified me."

C. "They are awful words indeed, and doubtless it is a very awful thing to die, and the Church would teach us so; the Church well knows how frail her children are, and she warns and exhorts them; but I think you must remember that those prayers are meant for the living, for those who come to a burial of the dead; meant at that solemn time to draw their minds to pray against the sin which would bring them to 'the bitter pains of eternal death.' We all need that prayer. But if, as I believe, you have offered it faithfully, He has heard, He will hear and answer

it : you will not be suffered at the last hour to fall from Him by word or deed ; by irritability or impatience ; by fear or mistrust. The pain of dying may be great to you, though it is not to all ; but His grace is sufficient for you, and you will find that when you are weak, then you are strong, that in the utmost weakness you will find everlasting strength meeting you. Fear not."

W. "O that it may be so, Sir."

C. "Say these words often to yourself, 'I am not alone, for my Saviour is with me.' Believe that 'He has overcome the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.' One thing I am sure would greatly strengthen you, and give you to feel more your oneness with Him who has died that you may live, the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which you have taken before. Would you like me to administer it to you?"

W. "I feel that I ought to receive it, Sir, and it would be a great comfort, but I have some difficulties about it. I should like, if you please, Sir, to talk to you about it first."

C. "I will call to-morrow, for you are too exhausted now for it to be right to talk longer. And now let us pray."

C. "Good morning, my friend, how have you passed the night?"

W. "O Sir, I thought I should never have got through the night, I was so ill, and I did so wish to see you once more."

C. "Do you think now that the end is near?"

W. "Yes, Sir, I suppose I can't go on long; I have not found the thoughts of death so sad since you talked to me yesterday, Sir."

C. "I am thankful to hear that; and if the sad thoughts return, try to think, 'He is near that justifieth me,' and 'it is Christ that died.' You said yesterday that you wished me to talk with you about the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; you said you felt some difficulties; what seems to you the greatest?"

W. "Why, Sir, there are several things; one thing is that I feel so very weak, and I don't think I should be able to attend properly, my thoughts are so wandering and distracted, and what the doctor has given me makes them so much more so. I have such very odd thoughts, Sir, they don't seem to me as if I thought them, and yet they quite hinder me from attending as I wish, that's one thing, Sir."

C. "Answer me one question, who sent you this weakness?"

W. "O, Sir, I know that God sent it."

C. "Well then, if He sent it to you, is it not His visitation? You know that He has said that He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust, and that He is not a hard Master reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strawed. Do you think that He would require any more attention of you than He knows you can give? Do you think He will expect that your thoughts shall not wander at all? He remembereth that you are dust; He searches your heart, and it is the desire of your heart He looks to, your will is what He accepts. Nevertheless I may tell you for your comfort that many people who have been very weak, as weak as you are, have found that God was very gracious to their weakness, and even raised them quite above it for the time, and enabled them to forget their bodies. You must pray to Him to let this be the case with you, if it be His holy will; and if not, to enable you to believe that the state He wills for you is the best, and to believe that He sees and accepts the desires of your heart. I do not think that exceeding weakness should (except in very rare cases) be any reason against having this greatest of blessings, which is for the 'strengthening and refreshing of your soul.' But now as you are so

weak I will not say more about this, but ask you what is another of your difficulties ?”

W. “O, Sir, my sinfulness. I feel that the last Communion that I shall have on earth is such a very solemn thing, it needs so very much preparation. I never saw sin as I see it now.”

C. “It is an awful thing to feel that for the last time we are to ‘shew forth the Lord’s death,’ and that ere another day He may come and fetch you; yet never before did you so much need to ‘eat His flesh, and drink His blood,’ so that your sinful body may be made clean by His body, and your soul washed through His most precious blood, that you may evermore dwell in Him and He in you. Fear not, for you do not presume to come to His table trusting in your own righteousness, but in His manifold and great mercy. In days of health we should feel that each one may be our last Communion, and should prepare for it as we should wish to do if it were so. God has called you to a very short illness, He does not therefore require long preparation of you. ‘You do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins ?’ ”

W. “Sir, I grieve for them, and as well as I can, ask for forgiveness, but it is all so cold, at least so wandering; I am afraid I do not repent

as I ought, I wish with all my heart that I could repent.”

C. “ ‘He is exalted to give repentance ;’ it is a gift that He will give to those who ask it of Him in faith, He will put repentance into your heart. Do not distress yourself because your feelings are all so weak and wandering, God knows it all, and does not expect of you a service that you cannot now render. Do not seek after pleasant feelings, or excitement, or any particular kind of enjoyment, only seek to rest in the God of love, and to submit yourself wholly to His holy will and pleasure. Is there any one sin that lies upon your heart ?” ’

W. “ Yes, Sir, there is one ; I have been so unthankful. God has given me many blessings, and O, Sir, I have often received them as rights, and have not thanked Him for them ; and when gentlefolks have been kind to me, I’ve felt that it was only what they ought to be, and in my heart I have been unthankful. I never saw what a sin it was till now, and now it seems such a very great sin. I used to think, Sir, that I had so many trials, so much poverty, and that it was all so hard to bear, and I did not think of all God’s goodness to me. I have had a very murmuring and complaining spirit, and always thought that things were

going so wrong with me, instead of working at all that God gave me, and that you and others gave me, Sir. And now with death so near, it seems such a very great sin. I could wish to live longer that I might do differently, and might thank and praise God. O, Sir, I cannot shew my thankfulness now, I have murmured and repined so often. Will God pardon me when I have but now begun to see the sin or to be sorry for it?"

C. "Yes, He will forgive you, if you truly repent you of this sin, and in His Name. And the penitent, the believing soul will find that mercy which it needs, and that comfort in the blessed Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. As you think it unlikely that you will be here on earth to-morrow, shall I come to you this afternoon to give you that blessing which will the most strengthen you in passing through the valley of the shadow of death?"

W. "Thank you, Sir, thank you, Sir, and will you pray for me that I may receive it as I ought?"

C. "I will indeed. Let us pray now for help."

HINTS FOR THE SICK.

II.

C. "Good morning, my friend. I was very glad to see you at church once more yesterday, and to be permitted to return thanks to Almighty God for 'His late mercies vouchsafed to you.' "

W. "Yes, Sir, I was very thankful to be at church once more, and to give thanks to God for making me well again. I never thought to have gone there any more, Sir, but it used to be such a great comfort to me when I was ill, to know that I was prayed for at church; it made me seem to belong to the congregation, and I thought if I was to get better I should be sure to, if they prayed for me."

C. "Yes, I wish that all my parishioners who are sick would send to let me know when they are ill, and also that they cared to have the prayers of the congregation. We know that if any two or three agree on earth as touching any thing, it shall be done unto them of our Father which is in heaven, and we are sure that a prayer offered by so many, will be sure to

be answered ; if it be the will of God, it will be answered as we ask it ; certainly it will be answered as God sees to be the best for us ; for often He sees it best to cross our wishes ; and thus He really gives us more ‘ according to our need.’ ”

W. “ Sometimes, Sir, when I was ill, I used to feel very down-hearted ; I thought when I got better it would all go off ; but somehow I often feel very low-spirited now.”

C. “ I quite expect to hear that ; it is generally so when people are beginning to get about again. Just at first they are so glad at heart, so thankful to recover, that they think every thing seems bright and happy to them, and that it will always be so ; but people lose a great deal of strength in an illness oftentimes ; and then when they begin to stir about and fatigue themselves, they feel how weak they are, and that they cannot do as they would, and that depresses them ; and then they think they don’t get on, but only go back from day to day ; and every thing tires them, and then they feel fretful, and cross, and impatient, and every thing seems to go wrong with them.”

W. “ Ah, Sir, I feel all that very sadly, and it seems to me so very sinful, so ungrateful to God for all His mercies ; and it seems to me as if I

was only the worse for my sickness ; and yet I hoped I should have been better for it."

C. "Do not distress your mind by thinking thus ; you ought of course to be very sorry for every thing that is 'contrary to the law of God,' but much of this is mere bodily weakness, which is just as much disease as your late illness was. You will I trust earnestly seek to resist all evil, and not suffer yourself wilfully to be cross or discontented, or low-spirited, and you will pray earnestly to God to enable you not to yield, but to give you grace to 'fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil.' If you are 'overtaken in a fault,' you will humbly confess it before God, and try not to do so again ; but you must expect that weakness will cause you very trying feelings ; they will wear off by degrees, but even when you hope they are all gone, they will return again sometimes when you are more weak. You must receive this just as much as a trial, and as God's visitation, as your illness was."

W. "It's a comfort to hear you say this, Sir, I thought before yesterday how very much I should enjoy going to church again, I often counted upon it when I was ill, but I went, Sir, and found I could not attend as I used, and my thoughts were so wandering ; I was trying to think of what

I heard, but it all seemed to go away, and I was so unhappy, and when I came home I thought it over, and thought I was more wicked than I had ever been, for I had had such a warning, and I did not use to be so before I was ill.”

C. “This also is one of the great trials of weakness, but do not be out of heart, for ‘He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust;’ He only expected you to attend as far as you had strength to do so.”

W. “But it seems to me, Sir, as if I had not got the good out of my illness that I ought to have done.”

C. “Alas, we none of us get all the blessings that God is willing to give us, and the fault is that we do not ask Him faithfully to pour down upon us the abundance of His mercy, and then watch and wait for the blessing; but tell me, what benefits did you expect?”

W. “Why, Sir, I thought I should grow meek and gentle, and have fewer temptations, and be thankful and loving to every body, and be a better Christian every way.”

C. “O no, be sure that sickness alone cannot work all this in you; sickness in itself makes people impatient and cross, and to those who only receive it as though it was nothing but a

painful, disagreeable thing, it seldom works any good. Sickness is God's visitation ; it takes you for a time away from your usual employments which tempt you away from God, it calls you to think of Him, to hear His voice, to examine yourself, and to learn how sinful you have been, and to repent you truly of your sins, and in true faith to turn to God ; by this means it is a blessing, if it is rightly used, but it cannot change the heart, or the temper, or any thing evil in us ; we must not expect this, but must try to hear God's voice in it. You are made much more accountable by this sickness, for God has spoken, and He expects that from henceforth you shall hear His rod, and who hath appointed it, as you have never before done ; that you should feel more dedicated to Him, as 'one alive from the dead,' and as the more bound to serve Him by all the love and patience that He has shewn you, and by His raising you up again. He expects that from henceforth you will feel more sympathy with all who are sick or suffering, and serve Him by ministering to them, and that you will walk more humbly with God than you have ever done, living closer to Him, and feeding upon Him in the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and using diligently all other means of grace, and that not now only, but

from henceforth, and so long as you live. And now let us pray.

“ ‘ O LORD GOD, who hast wounded us for our sins, and consumed us for our transgressions by Thy late heavy and dreadful visitation ; and now in the midst of judgment remembering mercy, hast redeemed our souls from the jaws of death : we offer unto Thy fatherly goodness ourselves, our souls and bodies, which Thou hast delivered, to be a living sacrifice unto Thee ; always praising and magnifying Thy mercies in the midst of Thy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.’ ”

“ ‘ O GOD, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive, receive our humble petitions ; and though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet let the pitifulness of Thy great mercy loose us, for the honour of Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

“ ‘ O ALMIGHTY LORD, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern both our hearts and bodies in the ways of Thy laws, and in the works of Thy commandments ; that through Thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.’ ”

PLAIN SPEAKING TO NON-COMMUNICANTS.

SUPPOSE a physician in whom you placed great trust were to come to you and say, "unless you do this you will die." Would it be wise or safe to cast his counsel to the winds, or to put off doing it from week to week, from month to month? After such conduct would any one believe you, if you were to say that you had great faith in that physician? However you might praise his skill, however you might express your confidence, all your words would go for nothing, if you refused to do that which he ordered you to do for your health's sake, yea, for your life.

Well then, now take a similar case. Your Lord comes to you as the good Physician; He bids you take heavenly nourishment, heavenly food, even His Body and His Blood; He says

plainly, "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." Now if you do not take this heavenly food, this nourishment necessary for your very life, if you disobey this counsel and command, if you cast Christ's words behind you, or, what is the same, from year to year put off obeying Him, have you any proof whatever of your real faith in Christ? Will not all your words go for nothing, if you talk about trusting in Christ? Nay, I ask you what is trust, what is confidence? Surely it is distrust, it is want of faith, to receive a command, to receive the most urgent and pressing expression of a will, and to leave that will neglected and undone.

Our Lord has commanded us to partake of the blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood. He has plainly said that it is necessary for our soul's health, that without it our spiritual life withers, droops, declines, dies away within us. We prove then our faith by acting upon His words; we prove our faith by taking of that divine heavenly nourishment; we prove our faith by doing that which He who best knows what is for our good has ordained for our good; for He is not one who lays needless, useless injunctions on His flock. We prove our want of faith by not doing

what our Lord enjoins, by putting aside, by neglecting to fulfil His will.

It is said in Scripture, "He that keepeth My commandments, he it is that loveth Me." Yes, we feel the truth of this; we deal thus one with the other. We reckon those only as our friends who do what we wish; we cannot reckon those as our friends who refuse, or delay, or dislike to do what we wish. It is a sign, it is a test of trust and love to keep the commandment, to do Christ's will; there is no other sign, no other test of faith or love of the slightest worth. Apply this test to this very point. How can we number ourselves among our Lord's disciples who love their Lord, if instead of keeping we break this commandment concerning the Lord's Supper, break it constantly, habitually, time after time. If our Lord says "Do this," and we do it not, it seems monstrous to talk either of faith or love. Deeds are better than words; love gives proof of love; love hates to waste itself in words; it wants opportunities of proving itself in deeds and acts.

Consider this also; we shall soon be judged, for "the end of all things is at hand;" we shall be judged for the things done in the body. If we have done our Lord's will to the utmost of

our power, we shall find mercy from God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But if we have not done God's will, what hope shall we have to fly to? we shall stand speechless before our Lord; not even with a stammering tongue shall we have strength to speak. Now among the portions of this will of Christ which we have to do in order to find mercy at the last great day, is this partaking of the Lord's Supper. "Do this," is the charge of Christ Himself to all the members of His Church. When we appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and are judged, not simply by what we have said or thought of Christ, but by what we have done, how shall we be able to face the Lord, if we are conscious that such a command has been unfulfilled? I see no defence that we shall dare to make. We may patch up excuses for ourselves; we may make salves for our conscience now; we may drug our conscience, and send it to sleep by saying to ourselves, "We will do this by and by; we will do it soon; we are too busy now, and cannot prepare ourselves just yet; but we will set about it when we have more time, and less business or pleasure upon our hands." All these sorts of excuses, these whispers of the devil or of our own self-deceiving hearts, may give us a sort of ease at present, but not

one of these excuses shall we ever dream of uttering before the throne of God. No, we shall there see how falsely, how treacherously, how very treacherously we dealt with ourselves; we shall then see that we took up rags to cover our nakedness; we shall then have a terrible consciousness of being without excuse, without plea or justification or defence; not a word will rise to our lips. When we stand in the awful light of God, we shall feel that in reality we were putting off God and choosing the world; that we were putting the world before God, when we refused, or delayed to do that which our Saviour commanded us to do.

Nay, as regards our Lord Himself, do we not take the words of mercy out of His mouth? Do we not ourselves hinder the words of pardon which He delights to utter. Take what happens in the world. Suppose a master has given a servant work to do, or suppose a father has given a son work to do, work within the power of the servant and the son; suppose year after year they have besought, urged, pressed most anxiously the doing of the work; and suppose year after year the work is left undone; the master could not with truth say to his servant "well done thou good and faithful servant;" neither

could the father say the like to his son. They could not call disobedience obedience, for this were to put darkness for light, and to call bitter sweet. If there had been endeavours to complete the task, if there had been marks of real willingness and real earnestness in attempting it, if real labour had been bestowed upon it, and it were in some sort finished, though it might have been better done, the case would be different; the master might then without violating truth speak good words to the servant; the father likewise would have some witness of his son's obedience and love. But if it were not attempted, not done in any way, the master and the father, however they might yearn to speak words of acceptance and of praise, however they might long to deal mercifully, would have their lips closed and sealed; no sound of mercy, no sentence of acceptance, could come therefrom. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is Mine honour? And if I be a Master, where is My fear?" It is thus the Lord speaks through His prophet. How is it possible, I ask, that the Lord should say at the last day, "well done, thou good and faithful servant;" well done, loving and obedient son, if when He said "Do this," we have from year to

year done it not. He who longs to number us among His own in heaven, who has even shed His Blood for our salvation, will not be able to speak one word of mercy where there has been no effort to obey.

But in considering the command of our Lord when He said concerning the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, "Do this in remembrance of Me," we must not look upon it as a hard, stern law. A command it is, but a command of love to a feast of love. It was enjoined upon us under most touching, most affecting circumstances. Let any one read the Scripture in which it is enjoined, and if he has any heart he will be moved and touched to the very core; he will not be able to push such a command from him, he will feel at once the guilt, the utter want of love towards Christ in turning his back on such a command, on such an invitation to such a feast. It was not while our Lord was in the midst of His earthly life that He bade His disciples do this. He spoke of it indeed, as we find in the sixth chapter of St. John, which I exhort you to read attentively; but He waited to order it till His last Supper, His last Passover with His disciples; till He was about to be betrayed, that it might come with all the force and power

of dying words. "The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed," says St. Paul, "took bread : and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is My Body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." Yes, it was that sad and fearful night, "the same night in which He was betrayed." He knew that He was about to suffer, that the time was fully come, that all things were now accomplished, that the agonies of the cross were close at hand. For the last time He gathered His disciples, His friends, His children, His little flock around Him ; in very tender love He spoke to them ; He knew that every word then spoken would afterward be treasured in the very depths of their hearts, that they would be as precious pearls, that they would be fulfilled with most ardent love, and be esteemed almost beyond all other words. He reserved them for this very time, that they might thus have increased value and increased impressiveness.

Now we know that among ourselves the words of dying friends are most anxiously listened to,

and most earnestly obeyed; dying men too do not waste their breath; when they feel their time drawing near and their strength failing them, they speak only of those things which are nearest their hearts; they husband their fading strength that they may be able to speak; they design their words to fall into our very hearts; trifling wishes are not expressed at such a time, for that indeed would be to trifle with the most momentous portion of their life; we know how we catch every hint, every suggestion, every wish, at such a time, how our ears drink them in, how accurately they are remembered, how anxious we are to fulfil them to the uttermost, not only in the letter, but in the spirit, when death has sealed the eyes of our friend.

Now somewhat in this light consider the appointment of the Lord's Supper. It is laid upon us as with the dying words of our dear Lord, of Him who was not only going to die, but to die for us, of Him who is infinitely more than any earthly friend. The same night that He was betrayed He gave His disciples of that bread and wine which is His Body and Blood; He charged all His Church through them, He charged us at that time, to partake continually of that blessed feast. What shall we say if our Lord's

words spoken at such a time, spoken just when He was about to be dragged to judgment and to death, spoken just when He was about to suffer for our sins and to carry the whole weight of our sorrows, are neglected and set at nought. Where is our love towards Christ? O how unloving must we be, how unthankful, how dead to all sense of His most marvellous love, if we refuse to hear this voice of our loving Lord, if we turn our back upon the altar to which He bade us come. It is not a hard taskmaster who has set us a weighty task; it is our Saviour, whose voice, once heard by His twelve Apostles, still sounds in our ears; His commandments are not grievous. See Him even now breaking the bread and pouring forth the wine; hear Him now with words of tender love turning and saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me." What, if we draw back? Do we refuse? Are we deaf? Have we deafened ourselves? Has all our love gone out like a wasted fire? Should we not haste forward and with eager steps cast ourselves at His feet and bless Him for this heavenly meal, and with awed, thankful hearts eat and drink of this which is meat indeed and drink indeed?

Alas if we despise such a command so given, how can we meet the Lord? How shall we

dare to stand before Him, and to lift up our eyes to that sad reproachful face, to hear that voice saying to us, "In love I ordained that blessed Sacrament; in love I called thee to it; in love I charged the feast to be spread for thy soul's good; in love I enjoined, I commanded thee to partake thereof; that thou mightest more deeply treasure My words, I did not give the command till the night on which I was betrayed. And yet thou hast slighted it; thou hast turned thy back upon it; thou hast gone empty away; thou hast refused My feast; yea, thou hast refused Me; thou hast turned away from Me; thou hast slighted and rejected thy Lord; what can I do unto thee? I have done much for thee, that I might be merciful to thee; thou wast often called and often didst thou refuse. Alas, thou hast forced Me to lift up the sword against thee; thou hast hindered Me from pitying thee; thou hast wilfully put thyself among My disobedient children."

In some such strain as this we may suppose our Saviour speaking to us when we stand before Him at the judgment. How else can He speak? His sorrow will darken into anger, and His anger will fall on us, and we shall have our portion with the disobedient, unless we cease at once to disobey.

I have not told you the mysterious benefits and blessings that are conveyed in this feast ; I have not set forth its exceeding richness, its power and virtue to the worthy partakers of it. Of these things perhaps I may speak afterwards. At present I have only shewn you a plain command of Christ. Ask yourself, is it safe, or wise, or loving, to neglect the fulfilling of that command ? nay, is it not very perilous, very unsafe, very thankless and unloving ? If no other benefit come from this feast but the benefit that comes from an act of obedience, you will be richly repaid ; if no other harm come to you from not taking it than that which comes from an act of disobedience, that harm is tremendous, and beyond doubt you live in a state of fearful peril as long as you live in a state of disobedience. I speak as a friend ; as a friend I warn you, I beseech you, I earnestly pray you, “Do this” which your Lord has commanded you to do ; yea, do it at once, before it is too late.

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PRIVILEGE.*

WHO complains, who murmurs, who looks upon it as a task to be invited to a feast? Surely it is no irksome thing to sit down and to refresh ourselves with all manner of good things. We do not hold back; we do not turn away; we do not look upon it as a grievous thing; we do not need to be pressed and pressed, to be persuaded, and urged, and dragged to a feast; we rise up and get ready with willing and thankful minds; we are glad to go; we are in haste to be there; sometimes we look forward to the day of the feast with impatient minds; we wish that the time were come; we long to be sitting down with our friends.

If indeed one far more honourable than ourselves, some noble or prince, were to bid us to a feast, how honoured should we feel ourselves to

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be ; how our hearts would flutter with delight ; how we should tell our friends and neighbours ; how long beforehand it would occupy our thoughts, even when we were at work ; how we should prepare things fit for such a feast, and be anxious to be properly equipped ; how eagerly should we set forth when the day came, with a light step and light heart, wondering at the graciousness of the noble or the prince, and esteeming it a wonderful privilege to be called by one so high and great, a wonderful privilege to be such an one's guest, to occupy even the lowest seat in the house of such a host ! Should we need him to come and force us to his house ? Should we need him to send servant after servant day after day to press us to the feast ? Nay, the first message, the first invitation would fill us with great joy. We should accept the bidding gladly and at once. When the day came, gladly should we leave our shop, our trade, fields and farm ; gladly should we put off our working-dress for our best apparel. And when the feast was over, how should we talk of it with our friends, how should we remember all the glory and grandeur of it, all the richness of the loaded tables, all the dainties and costly fare bountifully provided for our use.

And now, my friend, consider what the Lord does to us. Turn from this earthly feast to hear the gracious words of our Lord. Our Lord gives us a bidding; our Lord calls us to His courts, His earthly palace, which is the House of Prayer; our Lord gives us a feast of good things, and says through His servants the pastors of His flock, "Come, for all things are now ready;" "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" "Ho, every one that thirsteth, . . . come buy wine and milk without money and without price . . . eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." This is the great invitation to the great feast. It is the Lord's Supper to which we are all pressed. For us He has prepared a feast; for us He has provided a banquet of the soul; for us He has spread forth a heavenly meal. O what shall we say to this? How should our hearts burn within us, and rejoice when we hear the very voice of Christ Himself sounding out of heaven and saying, "Come, for all things are now ready." How should our hearts beat with joy and be very glad, when not an earthly prince or lord, but even the King of kings and Lord of lords, bids us poor wretched sinners to come and partake of a feast which He has prepared,

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when He Himself beseeches us to be His guests, and has provided a guest-chamber wherein there is room for all, room for the richest of us, room for the poorest, room for every one whose soul is an hungered or athirst for heavenly things ! What an honour is this, what a high privilege to be asked by our Lord Himself ! what great condescension of Christ, what great love towards us ! What more could He do ! He comes to feed us, He, the Lord of heaven and earth, calls us to His House, that He might then strengthen and refresh our parched and hungry souls.

Should any be behind-hand when He calls ? Should any be backward ? Nay, should we not be forward to draw near to Him ? Should we not all of us press to His holy House ? O let us all rise up and go ; come, all of you, whatsoever you be, come rich and poor, come the very meanest and poorest of the poor, come lame, halt, maimed, creep any how to this feast. Your Lord is there ; your Lord calls ; your Lord stands ready to receive you in His House ; the door is open ; the feast is spread ; come all of you, for you are highly honoured. None of us deserve such a feast ; none are worthy of such a privilege ; it is too good for such as we, though of His grace God bids us come. Blessed be the

Lord who is thus gracious to us, who, though dwelling in the heavens, yet visits us on earth, who satisfieth us with good things, who stoops so low as to consider our spiritual wants and to supply what we want. If the Lord calls, is it possible to turn away from Him? Is it possible not to delight to do His will, when His will is that we should draw near to the feast which He has spread? What are the invitations of all the kings and princes of the world to this of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth!

But not only consider who it is that calls, but what it is of which you are invited to partake. As it is not an earthly king who bids you come, so it is not an earthly feast; you are not asked to taste of earthly fare. It is heavenly food, heavenly sustenance; it is bread from heaven; it is the true Manna; it is the juice of the true Vine. There is nothing here to cloy or satiate; there is nothing here merely to please the fleshly lip; but there is food sweeter than honey to the tongue, sweeter than aught that man can offer; for the sweetness is of God. It is a wonderful, most excellent, most mysterious feast. Only hear what Christ Himself has said, "Take, eat;" and what does He give us to eat? "This is My body." "Drink ye all of it," He says;

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and what is this drink? "This is My blood of the New Testament." Weigh these blessed, these mysterious words; see now the privilege of being called to this most divine banquet. "The cup of blessing which we bless," says St. Paul, "is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Even so; so great, so wonderful, so rich with heavenly richness is this feast, that we are called spiritually to "eat the flesh" of the Son of God, "and to drink His blood," to "be partakers of His most blessed body and blood." We ask not how it is that by means of this bread and wine we are able to feast on the body and blood of our dear Lord. We ask not to have the veil drawn back to reveal a mystery to our eyes. It is enough for us to believe that Christ does feed us and feast us, does cleanse our sinful bodies by His body, and does wash our souls by His most precious blood in this heavenly feast. Only let us believe; only let us be sure that God does feed us who duly receive those holy mysteries with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. This is enough. We cannot know heavenly things perfectly as yet.

Great then is He who calls ; great is the feast to which He calls ; great the privilege and great the honour of being called. Most willingly should we draw near ; with godly anxiety, with godly forwardness should we press towards the Altar. Can we refuse the offer of our Lord ? Can we hesitate or have a moment's doubt ? Surely he who delays or doubts is doubting whether to benefit himself. He who is a laggard when bidden to such a feast, is guilty of great and grievous unthankfulness to his Lord, knows not his own good, chooses starvation, withholds himself from the best food of the soul, prefers pining away and dying, when he might have spiritual strength and life and health.

O all ye who are wont to turn your backs upon the Altar, who neglect or despise the bidding of your Lord, who are ready for earthly but not for heavenly feasts, consider what ye do. What is it to refuse Christ ? What is it to hear His voice of love and to deafen your ears to such a voice ? Is it not, in plain words, to refuse to be saved, to refuse the cup of salvation, to go away from blessings and benedictions ? We may cast away these privileges now ; yes, we may cast away pearls, and like swine

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tread them under foot as though they were common things ; but this is after all to cast away ourselves, and the day will come when we shall wish all these privileges back. Happy and wise are they who thankfully and humbly accept the great invitation to the great feast and Supper of the Lord in His Church, for they will have a greater feast hereafter ; they will have not only a heavenly meal, but a heavenly meal in heaven, the eternal Supper of the Lamb.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

HER SUN HAS GONE DOWN WHILE IT WAS YET DAY.

A TRUE TALE FOR THE YOUNG, WRITTEN BY A PASTOR
TO HIS FLOCK.

It was but three weeks ago, my friends, that we committed to the ground the remains of a lad but seventeen years of age, whom God had prepared by trials and afflictions for his latter end. He, poor sufferer, lingered on his patient bed of sickness for near six months, in full possession of his faculties to his dying hour. But how different was the case with her whose earthly tabernacle we have just laid in "the home of all living" till the last trump shall sound: she had no such time allowed her for preparation to meet her God. In His all-seeing wisdom, she was not permitted to receive consolation from any one on earth during her trying illness*. And herein lies the awfulness of the warning to us, and to all who are unprepared to die, who think to make their peace with God on

* Typhus Fever.

a dying bed. Cut down in the midst of her days, she stands a monument to all who are not striving with earnest purpose to walk in the narrow path that leadeth to everlasting life !

But three weeks last Sunday and she worshipped with us, and at the altar partook of the Bread of Life, the pledge of Immortality. Little did I, as I administered to her, and you, as you knelt by her side, forbode how near she was to her early grave !

Her sun of life had but just risen, she had but just come up, and has been cut down as a flower in the midst of her days,—just as she had reached that age when life seems to open out upon us with all its vanities and attractions. Happily it had none for her. The dull routine of a factory life, the trials and temptations attending it, had long ago embittered her cup of pleasure, and made her seek happiness where alone true joys are to be found.

We may not search into the ways of God, and enquire, why hath He done this? yet we may humbly ask of Him the lesson we are to learn from this sudden outstretching of His hand.

As far as she is concerned, we have the comforting hope and belief that she is taken away from the evil to come. It pleased God by trials

and afflictions, and by heavy temptations, to perfect His work in her in a short time ; so “ she hath given up the ghost, her sun has gone down while it was yet day,” not in anger, but in mercy. I speak advisedly when I say that few young people have been tried and tempted as she has been, and fewer still have so faithfully abided their trial.

She has grown up among us from her childhood, and has been so mixed up with us all, and her death seems to have excited so much interest, and to have impressed so many of us, that I intend by God’s blessing, my friends, to set before you a few circumstances connected with her life, that you may rejoice in that well-grounded hope which I entertain, that she has passed from this world of sin and trial, to rest in peace with her Lord above.

My knowledge of her dates but five years back, to the time of the Consecration of this Church,—five most eventful years of her life ! She became a constant attendant at the daily prayers, and remained so until her last illness. I will not conceal from you the deep anxiety with which I watched her course during the early period of that time, nor the many tears with which I have pleaded before the throne of grace

in her behalf, because I feared that, forgetful of her Baptismal vows, she was following the ways of the world: often have I entreated her with tears to consider that the end of such ways is death eternal.

Many of you (now present) will recollect when, in August 1847, you went with her to be confirmed. Bitterly has she since lamented the thoughtless spirit in which she approached that sacred ordinance.

But I will not now dwell on these things; I will pass on to tell you how the God who answereth prayer, in the end answered mine for her, so that, for the last two years or more, a gradual and perceptible change has been visible in her life,—a change deepening more and more into a true and genuine repentance, shewing itself in clearer views of her own helplessness, and her Saviour's grace as all-sufficient for her.

From the first she formed one of the weekly class of girls that I have held in the evenings after Service. Often have I seemed to toil all night without taking any thing. Many temptations have I experienced from Satan to cease praying for her, and to leave her to follow her own ways. But, "be patient" was the exhortation of the Apostle, "behold the husbandman

waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it." So I laboured on in faith in the command, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be good alike^b."

At this night-school it was my custom to teach writing, and give religious instruction from the Bible. There she learned to write. At other times she used to come to me, principally before coming to the Holy Communion. And often would she sit with her face buried in her hands, in tears, and unable to speak. At last, one evening on opening her copy-book to set her a copy, I saw some lines she had written out; this was in March last, and it seemed from them as if she had foresight into that early death which awaited her; they began thus :—

Weep not, dear friends, for me at all,
For I must fall, when God doth call;
My Saviour early calls me home,
Prepare, my friends, and after come.

This induced me to urge her to write to me, which she soon after did, and I fully reaped the reward of my labour in having taught her to

^b Eccles. xi. 6.

write : for from her letters I learned many things with which she much wished to acquaint me, and found how deeply and seriously she thought on the things of eternity. Thus she wrote about the night school : “ I have come to your night school, and, when away, have thought no more of what you have said ; but, O sir, this last two or three weeks I have longed for the night to come, because I think it is for my good, but, O Sir, I never could have thought that you could have borne with me so long, and I have went on my own way.”

She soon after wrote about the Sunday school. “ I hope you will forgive me, for I have given you many aching hearts. O Sir, if it had not been for you I might have been lost for ever. O Sir, I have given you more trouble than any girl in the school. O Sir, I hope God will reward you for it. O Sir, God has given me many warnings, but I have went on still in the ways of the world. O Sir, ask God to forgive me, pray for me.” At the same time she copied out the following lines and sent me.

I love the Sunday School,
The place my youthful feet have trod,
Where I have heard of Wisdom's ways,
That lead to peace and God.

A TRUE TALE FOR THE YOUNG.

I love the Sunday School ;
'Tis there the praise of God we sing,
'Tis there we bow the knee in prayer
To God, our heavenly King.

I love the Sunday School,
Where we the Holy Bible read,
Which tells of Christ, who came to be
A Saviour in our need.

I love the Sunday School,
And those who watch'd,
And wept o'er me,
May they His Glory see !

Oh ! that when life's few cares are past
Our teachers we may meet,
Upon the blissful plains, and cast
Our crowns at Jesus' feet !

Soon after she wrote to me telling me of two events in her life which had made a lasting impression upon her. One was, the death of her brother ; the other referred to one night when I had found her, as I thought, in ways of evil, and taken her to her father's grave, and there prayed with her at the dead of night.

She was at this time more especially (I speak now of about four months ago) led by the mercy of God to review her past life, and, bowed down by the weight of sin, she often sought me. It

seemed, indeed, as if "the remembrance of her sins was grievous unto her, the burden of them intolerable," and she frequently wrote, urging me to pray for her, confessing how completely her former resolutions for good were made in her own strength.

She ever looked back to the day on which she was confirmed with deep sorrow, as having gone entirely leaning on herself; the last Confirmation brought this so vividly to her mind that she walked to see it, and returned home at night, having fasted all the day. She wrote thus to me concerning it: "I do so wish I could see my Confirmation over again, but I never never shall." And again: "When I look at my Confirmation card and Communion card, I am almost in despair."

Speaking of her past life she adds: "Sir, the more I think of one sin, the rest do come into my mind, and I do try sometimes to get rid of them out of my mind, and I am afraid that is a great temptation of Satan. O Sir, do pray for me, more and more, and I do believe you do, and sometimes I think, Sir, I do not pray as I ought, and I think He will not hear my prayers. O blessed Lord, when we were Thine enemies Thou didst come down and redeem us

from the power of hell ! And I hope, please God, to write to you before I come to the Lord's Supper."

The last two months of her life, Satan knowing (it seems) how short her time was, redoubled his assaults, as a roaring lion seeking to devour her soul, but by God's grace she wrestled earnestly with him, complaining often to me, both in conversation and by letter, of the bitterness of the temptations, and the weariness of the strife.

It is remarkable, and also full of warning to the young, and all who think lightly of the Lord's day, that his assaults were more fearful than on any other day, and needed the whole armour of God to withstand. Had she been prevailed on to neglect the Services of that sacred day, she must have grievously, if not hopelessly, fallen. Thus in a letter dated May 29th, she complains, "Satan is so busy with me that I hardly know what to be at, and, O Sir, Sunday night a going down home Satan put such great temptations in my mind, and I thank God I did not give up to it, the remembrance of my sins is grievous unto my eyes ; forgive me, Lord, those sins which I know and those which I know not, the sins I have hid from Thee and from myself." And in another letter, complaining still of his

unceasing assaults, she says, "O Sir, I do so often think God will not forgive me, but I hope He will, but, O Sir, I think this is a temptation of Satan, and I do find it hard work, till sometimes I think I must give up, but O do, Sir, pray to God, and I do pray to God to give me strength to persevere more and more, to deny myself, and take up my Cross daily and follow Him, but I find that if I do not check my evil tempers, by little and little, they will get the better hold of me, and so I shall fall away from my state of salvation. May Jesus be with me, that if I fall into sin at any time I may at once repent and turn to Thee." . . . "May God bless us both and hear our prayers! To my friend and pastor. Elizabeth M—."

This beautifully expressed letter^e shews how the entrance of God's Word had enlightened her mind, for it is much to be observed, that uneducated as she was, and having but just learned to write, it was impossible she could express herself otherwise than she felt, she could only write the language of her heart; the last letter I ever received from her, sent to me while I was absent from home on account of ill health, and written little more than a week before she

^e Bad spelling alone has been corrected in the letters.

was taken ill, while it complains of the same temptations, shews how completely she was weaned from this world, and was striving to prepare herself to meet her God in judgment, whenever that event might come. And though then in health and strength, in less than five weeks she slept in Jesus.

“My dear Pastor,

“O Sir, my life is indeed made up of trials and temptations, Satan do tempt me more and more, but I thank God that I do not give up to them so much as I did. But, O Sir, the remembrance of my past sins is great, those sins which I have tried to hide and cannot, the wanton and evil words which I have spoken, the sinful and ungodly deeds which I have committed. Lord be merciful unto me, and heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee. I confess that I am a wretched sinner and unworthy of the least of Thy mercies, forgive me all that is past, I know too well how little I have remembered, and all that Thou hast suffered for me. But with my sins Thou wert crucified, O Lord. O Sir, something in me do seem to say God wont forgive me, and I am afraid He wont, do my dear friend, pray

for me that God may give me strength to persevere more and more. O Sir, it is but a short time before we must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, and I hope if we ever shall meet on earth again, I may never give you so much trouble as I have. Satan was so busy with me on Sunday night to tempt me to do some things very wrong, and I was glad that I had to write to you, Sir, so that I did not go, for if I had I might have fallen into sin, and I thank God that I did not go. O pray for me, do Sir, may God bless you."

Latterly there was seldom a time in which I did not observe her in tears during the sermon. In one letter, after saying, "O Sir, pray to God for me, and thank God for me, and I thank Him for sending you here," she adds, "I hope God will give you strength to teach me, and make me understand your sermons more." How much this prayer was realized will be seen from the following passage in a letter written on the night of Good Friday, after having heard a sermon on the text "It is finished." "I am thankful to God that He hath opened my eyes; O Lord, give me grace to feel the burden of my sins that I may always turn to Thee for help, and may I be dead this day with Thee

in sin and rise in glory with Thee, and then may I say, 'It is finished.' "

She received the Holy Communion in the following month after she had been confirmed, and latterly (when able to write) she generally wrote to me before coming to that Holy Sacrament; thus on last Holy Thursday she wrote, "I shall be glad to come to the Lord's Supper to-night^d, for I do long for the night to come," shewing how her soul hungered and thirsted after righteousness.

On another and previous occasion she wrote, "My dear Pastor, I write you these few lines to tell you that I think I am not worthy to come to the Lord's Supper on Sunday, because Sir, I think it would not be right if you did not know what I had on my mind, for I think you ought to know it, but, O Sir, do pray to God for me more and more to forgive me that I may never run into them again."

After having come to me, the next day, she again wrote. "My dear friend and Pastor, I write to tell you that I am sorry to give you so much trouble as I did last night, but O Sir, it gives me great comfort after, and I thank God

^d The Holy Communion was celebrated on the night of Maundy or Holy Thursday.

that He made me able to tell you. And I hope by God's blessing we both shall meet at the Lord's Table on Sunday and pray together, and I cannot, Sir, think how you have borne with me this last three years, and when I think of the trouble you have had with me I am thankful to God To my friend and affectionate Pastor."

After proceeding in her usual even course of attending the daily Prayers after factory hours, and communicating every other Sunday, she again wrote that her mind was troubled: "I do hope God will forgive me, and do, Sir, pray to God for me and thank God for me, and I thank Him too, for sending you here, for if not, I might have been like many other girls, but, O Sir, I do hope you will pray for me more and more, what I have done wrong I cannot get out of my mind. I wish I could tell you Sir, but I hope to tell you." Having seen me she afterwards wrote, "I should like to stop on Sunday, because, Sir, I know that if I should not stop till I am worthy to come, I should never come near that Table, and therefore though I am unworthy of so great a mercy yet I beg for His grace to make me worthy, or at least such as Thou wilt accept, for Thou hast given the medicine for my soul, the Sacrament

of Thy most precious Body and Blood. ‘Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips.’ And I should like to write more to you, Sir, but I have not time now, but, O Sir, it is such a hard thing to do right,—for my friend and affectionate Pastor.”

On reflection I cannot remember that she ever told me tales, or spoke evil to me, of any one. On the contrary, of some who had tried deeply to injure her character, she always spoke with the utmost charity.

Many of the sins which troubled her conscience were what the world calls nothing; but, looking on them by the light of the Cross, they deeply pained her, and, as she expressed it, made her heart bleed to think on, as she looked upon her Saviour.

We know, alas! how fearfully the world profanes such Holy days of the Church as it sees fit to abstain from working on. In this manufacturing district, while Ascension day is not observed at all, Good Friday (on which the mills are closed) is kept by many as a day of festivity, holiday making, or sight seeing. In reference to such customs she wrote to me during the last Holy week. “If you please, Sir, I write to ask you if it is right for me to go to a

tea-party on Good Friday, for my — do want me to come, and I think it is not right, but I thought it proper to ask you if you think it is right.”

The last letter but one which she wrote I received on a bed of sickness, and a portion of it will serve to illustrate her unwillingness to speak of the faults of others. “I have had a great deal of trouble this Whitsuntide, and I have tried to drive it away, but it is not about myself, and I have reason to thank God for it, and if it had not been for you I might have been as bad.” What this trouble was, I never learned from her, though I heard afterwards it was concerning one of her family. So deeply humble was she, that the sins of others only made her turn her eyes inward, so she continues her letter; “O Sir, when I look on the Saviour on the Cross, and see how many times I have crucified Him by sinning, it makes my heart bleed, but Satan do try to drive it away. I pray God to reward you for all the trouble you have taken with me, for I cannot return thanks enough, and I pray God if we never meet again on earth, we may meet in Heaven.”

But now the scene is changed. I have been raised, by the mercy of God, from that bed of

sickness: she has been taken, and I, who have till now been her teacher, must become the learner; and beseech God with earnest prayer that, having shewn her the way to Heaven, I myself become not a cast-away!

From all this you will perceive the deep work of grace which was being carried on within, unknown to all around her, save her spiritual Pastor, though none could fail observing the increasing seriousness of her character; her lonely wrestlings, and nightly communings with her God, His eye alone beheld, who was pouring out upon her the Spirit of grace and supplication, and making her heart bleed as she looked upon her Saviour: thus preparing her for her early grave, and for seeing Him for ever "as He is."

Latterly, I have been told, she spent all her spare time alone in the chamber, retiring to her bed-room immediately she returned from work, and only coming down when the Church bell summoned her to Evening Prayer. Sunday July 6th was the last day she ever worshipped with the Church militant on earth; on the following day she sickened; in a few days she was, by medical advice, moved from the Valley, where she lodged with her sister, to her

mother's on the hill, for the benefit of purer air. There she continued in a kind of stupor from which she never rallied, but gradually lost her strength, till her spirit passed peacefully away, as if in sleep! As the house was close to the Parsonage I saw her and prayed with her two or three times a day, for though she was unable to speak, I felt sure she was conscious; indeed as long as her strength remained, when at prayer, a slight inclination of her head at the Sacred Name of Jesus, assured me of it, and when increasing weakness robbed me of this comforting sign, I observed that though she could give no token of assent when I asked if I should pray with her, yet, as I knelt down she closed her eyes, and opened them again when I had finished. For one brief space before her death her tongue was unloosed, and she pronounced the word "Father" distinctly, and in a few moments, into His hands resigned her spirit. So ended the life on earth of Elizabeth M., July 26th, 1851, aged 22.

There is one more circumstance in her short but eventful life to which I will allude, calculated as it is to afford instruction to all, but especially to poor tempted factory girls. Full of the deepest instruction, it probably formed the

turning point of her life, and on the issue of that trial her future state depended. You have heard how sorely she was tempted. It was my lot once to witness her in the hour of trial. She knew it not, poor girl, but now she is beyond the wickedness of men, and the malice of the evil one, I may refer to it.

She stood, and by her stood the tempter, in human form. I saw her trembling frame. I watched as the power of the tempter seemed to thicken around her. Then, as with a mighty effort, she threw herself upon her knees, and clasped her hands to Heaven for strength to resist the temptation. Need I say that aid was given? for "God is a present help in trouble." Never knew I before the power of prayer; with the uplifting of her hands the tempter left her, and she, poor helpless girl (as the world would say) was left alone. That scene will ever be stamped on my mind. I shall never be able to express the feelings of that hour! I had seen the evil effects of girls going to work at so young an age. I had seen the consequences of it in the ruin and misery, and even death of many a poor girl. I had felt almost in my secret heart as if Satan were stronger than God. But that hour cleared up all doubts and difficulties,

her defects. Now look upon her with the eye of charity, since you have seen the inmost workings of her soul. Learn from her steadfastness, to fight under Christ's banner against sin, the world and the devil, and God shall bruise Satan shortly under your feet. Be regular in your attendance at the Sunday School, as she was to the time of her illness: be as plain and simple in your dress, be as constant in coming to the House of God, and learn to value the daily prayers as she valued them.

When sorely beset by Satan and tempted to give up all, remember how she wrestled with the tempter and prevailed. As you toil at your work, and are weary with your trials, think on the peace she enjoys in that blessed place above, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." A few more trials and temptations, and your turn will come. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, strengthen yourselves in God, fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life. "Be thou faithful unto death, and He shall give thee a crown of life."

But above all imitate her in her preparation for death while in health and strength. Alas! where would she be now, had she put off that to some future day, or a bed of sickness: for, as you have seen, from the nature of her dis-

order, no time for preparation was allowed her, though I firmly believe that throughout her three weeks' illness, so patiently borne without a murmur or one sign of impatience, she was holding secret communing with her God, who was therein perfecting in silence apart from man the gracious work He had begun.

To the world around, her death is as little known or regarded as the fall of a leaf in the forest, but by us who have worshipped day by day, and Sunday after Sunday with her in this House of God, for nearly five years, it will be long, I trust, ere she is forgotten. But let the thought comfort us: that while we are praying and fighting here below, she is praising God above. Let us not then sorrow for her, even as those who have no hope, for she sleeps in Jesus. Ah! my friends, is not half the aching of heart that we feel at the loss of friends or relations, occasioned by the inward monitor which warns us that we are all unfit to enter that blessed place of rest, whither they are gone, and that our death, if we die as now we live, would be no re-union, but only the revealer of a more bitter separation, even banishment from the face of our Lord and all His Saints for ever?

In conclusion, let us ask, why on such occa-

sions as these, when all are impressed, so few are profited in the end? The calm surface of our peaceful village has been ruffled by this sudden blow. All of us are moved and troubled, but shall we return to the former state of stagnation? Shall there be none of the number, now so deeply moved, stirred up to imitate her penitence, and flee from the wrath to come? O see that your goodness be not like the morning cloud and the early dew, which appear but to pass away. Obey the warning voice: act on your first impression; listen to the first whispers of conscience, as it warned you when you heard of her death; that still small voice spoke truth. Wrap your face in your mantle and confess your sin, for it was the voice of God; be assured that if you obey that it will not mislead you. Listen to any other voice, and like Balaam you will be perplexed, and doubting what to do, or who to obey, and so perish in the end. Begin to do something, break off the sin you know of. Remember, you will be judged hereafter, not by what you have *felt* (however deeply you may have felt) but, by what you have *done*.

A FEW WORDS

TO THE FARMERS.

IN what follows, I propose to say a few words to my friends, the Farmers; a class of men at whose hands I have always hitherto met with kindness. Their kindness moreover has not been confined to civil words only: it has, many a time, extended to civil actions also. Have I asked them, as a favour, to find employment for a man who wanted work, or for a poor boy?—the favour has been granted. Have I begged that Good-Friday might be kept as a whole holiday on the farm?—I have been gratified to the full. Have I requested that the only farm-servant might be spared, not once or twice only, but twenty times it may be, in order that she might be prepared for her Confirmation?—the girl has been sent cheerfully, (except perhaps on churning days, or when there was some extraordinary work going on,) and I have never heard a word of complaint. All this

is alluded to with sincere pleasure, and deserves to be called to mind with real gratitude.

But (I say to myself,)—Surely a class of persons who can act in this manner, might be got to do a great deal more! Surely there must be a great deal more of good in these same Farmers, (and their Wives, and their Sons, and their Daughters,) than is commonly supposed! Farmers are commonly *said* to be a hard-hearted race. They have *the reputation* of being very selfish. This is certainly what is commonly *said* of them. Well, I will not judge them. We are none of us as good as we ought to be. We all have our faults; and doubtless the Farmers, as a class, have theirs. But instead of railing at them, I will see what may be done by a few kind words of remonstrance. Very *earnest* words,—words which come from the heart, and are most gravely and seriously spoken: but still, *kind* words. For, as I said before, I cannot help thinking that the Farmers might easily be got to do a vast deal more than now. And, as I am going to show, *it is in their power to do a great many things which would conduce in the highest degree to the comfort and well-being of CHRIST'S poor*, in every parish. That a Minister is the writer of this appeal, needs perhaps hardly to be avowed: and

how near to the heart of every Minister lies the well-being of CHRIST's poor, cannot possibly require to be stated. Their welfare is more precious to him, if possible, than his own: a thing near and dear to him as the apple of his eye. And this must be my excuse on the present occasion, if excuse be necessary. Yet, surely, no excuse or apology *can* be necessary on the part of a Minister of CHRIST, for addressing a few straightforward words to an English Farmer! And so, without further preface, I begin.

Now, to be plain with you, there are a great many things which call grievously for change; and which, one and all, if I mistake not, arise out of the Farmer's *want of sympathy* with his labourers. He does not *feel for them*, and *feel with them*, as he ought. I stay not to enquire the cause of this, nor where the fault lies: I am simply *stating a fact*; and a fact it is, that the Farmer *has no fatherly feelings* towards his labourers. He looks upon them perhaps *as his slaves*, or *as his enemies*, and he treats them accordingly. I am not speaking of *all* Farmers, of course; but I am speaking of *a great many*. Many Farmers, to my certain knowledge, have no other thought about their labourers than just to see *how much labour they can get out of them*, and *how cheap*

they can get it. I have thus purposely traced the evil up to its source. Almost everything I complain of in the Farmer is derived from the view he takes of the relative position of himself and his labourers. He does not *love* them. He does not *yearn towards* them. He does not feel *for* them, and *with* them. He does not *care* for them. I said it before, he does not LOVE them. And now I will give some examples of how this principle works. I will point out some of the things which I notice, more or less, in every parish; and which I trace back, directly, to the Farmer's want of concern for his people; those very people whom God has placed in his power, and whose happiness, as well as that of their families, He has, in great measure, entrusted to the Farmer's keeping!

I. The foremost place shall be given to the practice which prevails in some parishes of paying the Men their wages *once a fortnight*; sometimes, even, *once a month*. And then, upon a Saturday night.

Now, I would kneel down before a Farmer to get him to alter this practice. I would beg, on my knees, that the poor men might be paid their poor wages *every week*; and then, *upon the Friday*.

The benefit of this to the Labourer would be incalculable. A prudent wife, going to “the shop” *on Saturday morning*, with seven or eight shillings *in her hand*, knows what she is about. She knows, because she sees, exactly what she has to depend upon. She is not tempted to get so much as a pound of lard, or an ounce of tea, on credit. She knows, and the shopman knows, that she has got seven or eight shillings to lay out ; and that she has got *no more*. He knows too (and *she* knows) that, on *that* day week, she will have but the same number of shillings to spend. This is a check upon them both ; and *it acts as a check*. She does not run “up street” to the shop, *in the dark* ; and, under the excitement of many *pressing wants*, and amid the bustle of *Saturday night*, dispense the fourteen or twenty-eight shillings she has been sighing for so long. But the week’s wages, which came in late on Friday, she lays out, in broad daylight, in the forenoon of Saturday. One shilling is put into the saucer for rent : five shillings (suppose) goes for bread : there remains only one or two shillings. It is impossible, (and she *sees* that it is impossible,) to venture upon pork or lard, tea or sugar, while there remains only that small sum ; and shoes besides are wanted. But if the money does not

come in till at the end of fourteen or twenty-eight days, *who* can wonder if the poor family gets involved in the mean time? It is idle pretending that it must all come to exactly the same thing in the end. It does *not* come to exactly the same thing: and if any honest man, with two grains of common sense, will look at the matter fairly, he will admit that the system of paying labourers at long intervals is a ruinous system.

But pray does it not “come to the same thing” *to the Farmer* whether he pays his men on Friday, or on Saturday? weekly, or once a month, or fortnight? He *must have* the money. He certainly *means* to pay it. Why put it off, then? So that, really, I do not see that I am asking any favour at all. However, call it a favour. *As a favour*, I do most humbly ask the Farmers to pay their men WEEKLY, and on FRIDAY NIGHT.

II. Next I will mention the great and needless *violation of the Sunday*, which takes place in almost every farm in England. It really is a marvellous thing; and one, which, in a country like this, might be thought impossible; but it is a fact, that, from one cause or another, the Fourth Commandment is scarcely observed on the Farm. The Farmer and the Farmer’s Wife come

to Church, indeed; (except when some tempting combination of business and pleasure carries the Farmer to one of the neighbouring towns during the time of Divine Service :) so do their Son and their Daughter, at least once a day. (God be praised for it!) But where is "thy man-servant and thy maid-servant," all the while? What are "thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates," doing all Church-time? Come, I will tell you where they are, and what they are doing. You shall go with me to the Farm.

And first, you are to notice yonder little boy, standing beside the gate, doing nothing. Ask him what he is about, and he will tell you that he is *bird-keeping*. I am sure, for any good the boy does in the way of keeping off the birds, he had better be in Church. And if *somebody* with an immortal soul must stand beside the gate to frighten birds on Sunday morning, why single out the child who ought to be in school, at the only time of his life when he may be taught? But why have *anybody*, during Church-time, employed in such a way?

Do you notice *another* boy, yonder, sauntering off in the direction of a neighbouring village? Let us call him, and ask him where he is going, and on what business. He says he is "going on an

arrant for his master.” In other words, he is carrying a letter and a parcel to a farm four miles off, from the very person whose house we are approaching.

Observe next a youth of seventeen, sitting under the hedge, with a gun in his hand. *He* also is *crow-keeping*! and this is the Farmer’s son! But will any one pretend that *this* is necessary? Why, I have been credibly informed by such a youth, before now, that *if he fired off his gun once*, the crows would not come near the field for two or three hours; in short, till after Church-time!

Yonder, on the hill, is the Shepherd. For whole months in succession, *he* is never to be seen in Church. I fear his occupation *does*, at one season of the year, stand in the way of his duties. Still, he need not be such a stranger from the Church as he is in general. He should not be required, or allowed, to starve his own soul for the sake of feeding sheep.

Arrived at the Farm, you will find a boy and a dairy-maid cleaning the leads and the buckets: just as if some other arrangement might not easily be made for such necessary work, in respect of the time of doing it!

The stable is not without its offence, either:

not perhaps so much in the morning part, as in the evening, when the Carter may be found among the horses; and his boys with him, when they should be at Church and in the School.

In very truth, however, it lies with the Master not only to keep the Sabbath of the LORD's Day by laying aside the thought and care of his worldly business, and attending in person the Church, which is the appointed place of public worship and public confession of faith; but to *require the same* of his family and his people; and so to arrange and order their *necessary* business, (not accounting *that* necessary which is really not so,) that all may be seen at least at Church with him. This is the way for Farmers, above all other classes, to call down a blessing from the good God who giveth the former and the latter rain in its season, to make their lands fruitful. Or, if any should think less than they ought of God's providence in this, in *any* case to procure such a blessing in the spirit which makes His bounty—whatever it may be, aye and His visitations too,—a blessing to themselves.

But, I am constrained to add, that, *with some beautiful exceptions*, a spirit, the very opposite of that here advocated, is displayed by the Farmers.

I will relate some of the things which have come under my own personal observation.

There are Farmers who will keep on finding job after job for a man, all Saturday afternoon, till *more than the usual share* of "To-morrow's" work falls to the Sunday morning. When Sunday morning arrives, you will see a Farmer of this class setting pens for his sheep till it is near upon Church-time. After this, *he* may, or he may *not*, be able to hurry off to Church. But there is *no doubt whatever* as to what the labouring man, whom he has been employing, will do. *He* will not hurry off in any such direction, certainly.

Now, who knows not, that the remedy for having to set pens on Sunday, is to set *two* pens, divided by a moveable hurdle, *on the Saturday afternoon?* Remove the hurdle on the morrow, and your business is done.

But above all, *who* sees not that the way to ensure *rest* on the Sunday morning, is to cause *all possible* preparation to be made for the morrow, *over night?* to invent no superfluous jobs; on the contrary, *to slacken* the work of the Farm, so that every man may have a little time to spare? But I have literally known jobs *invented* for the Saturday until it grew dark!

When Sunday arrived, I have heard of Farms

where there were boots and shoes and knives to be cleaned, till the sun-dial on the village-Church pointed to the hour of *twelve* !

Then, during the pleasantest time of the year, some Farmers will make the discovery, every Sunday, that they must have the horse and gig got ready soon after nine o'clock. By consequence, the labouring Man is only *then* released from labour. Tired and dirty, he does not reach his cottage till it is almost ten o'clock : after which, he has to make himself clean. What chance is there that such an one will be in his place in Church ? or able to attend to the service if he does get there ? . . . But the fact is, he does not go at all : and it is not to be expected that he should. He is tired, and it is some little distance to Church, and he has seen his Master go off to take *his* pleasure ; he therefore sees no reason why he should not amuse himself also. Towards eight or nine at night, the Farmer threatens to return : and, of course, his Labourer is in readiness at the Farm at the earlier of the two hours named ; but the Master does not, in fact, return till much past nine. It is ten or eleven o'clock at night, therefore, before the Servant gets back to his cottage. And this is the Day of Rest ! the Day on which “ thou shalt do

no manner of work, thou, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, *thy cattle*, and the stranger that is within thy gates !”

Then again, I know Farms where the labourer is required *to stay all through the Sunday* ;—precisely because the Master is away !

“ But,” (says a Farmer,) “ *I keep no horse and gig* :”—or, “ *I never go out on Sundays* .” And he adds ; “ The man who looks after my horses does indeed receive from me a shilling a week more, (or two meals,—as the case may be,) for his Sunday labour ; but there is nothing to hinder him from going to Church if he chooses.”

Right ! I answer. The fault is, in many cases, or in great measure, doubtless, *the men’s fault*. *You* who speak, must be one of the better sort of Farmers. Not one of those who, because they give a Labourer his breakfast and his supper on Sunday, account themselves at liberty to fleece him of all his time in exchange. However, I will make bold to remark, that labouring Men require a word of counsel at their Masters’ hands, in addition to the liberty to do right, of which you speak. Besides *nothing to hinder*, there is often required *something to persuade*. Now, persuasion is of two kinds : there is the persuasion of *precept*, and there is the persuasion of *example*.

But the latter is by far the more powerful of the two. My earnest prayer, my hearty entreaty to you is, that you would employ BOTH.

III. The Farmers will think me a severe judge; but I have yet another complaint: and it is, that *they are inclined in all things to be too hard towards their Men*. Of this, I will give three examples.

1st. In the matter of Wages. They do not consider how a poor man is to live, so much as how little they themselves can be made to pay; and they reduce their wages accordingly.

Here, I foresee that a Farmer will turn round upon me and ask,—Then, am I not to get my labour done as cheap as I can? To which inquiry, my answer is simply,—Certainly you are not to consider that *alone*!

You have to consider that the labouring man, like yourself, has *to live*: and that, below a certain rate of wages, he cannot keep body and soul together. “Ah well,” replies the Farmer, “but he always *does* contrive to live on his wages, somehow or other.” But I am once more forced to contradict the Farmer. No, I answer; the poor labouring man does *not* always contrive to live on his wages. You are mistaken. Take any family you please, consisting

of a man and his wife, with four or five children under ten years of age, and you will find that they are *in debt*. You will find, (if they will speak out to you, as they do to CHRIST's servant,) that they owe a vast deal more money for Rent, for Bread, for Shoes, for Doctor's stuff, and for Shop things, than they will ever be able to pay.

"Then, they are dishonest!" exclaims the Farmer.—Stay a moment, my friend; not quite so fast. I am not the advocate of debt or dishonesty: but I have questioned your labouring men close; and I have stood in the shop on a Saturday night; and I have seen their poor wives lay out their money; and—my heart has sickened. It is not their fault, if they are in debt. It is not indeed. *You* would be in debt were you in their place. *I* should have been ruined, beyond all hope, a hundred times over. Come, you shall have a true case; and gainsay it, or deny that it is a common one, if you can:—

You give Thomas Green, (one of your labourers), seven shillings a week. Mary, his wife, and six children, have to live upon this. Not one of them can do any work: not even Mary; she is forced to stay at home to look after the six children. You shall hear how

A FEW WORDS TO THE FARMERS.

the husband's wages were spent last Saturday :—

	s.	d.
8 gallons of Bread, at $10\frac{1}{2}$. . .	7	0
1 lb. of Bacon	0	6
$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of Candles	0	3
2 oz. of Tea	0	6
$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of Soap	0	$3\frac{1}{2}$
1 lb. of Salt Butter	0	9
$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of Soda	0	$1\frac{1}{2}$
	<hr/> 9	<hr/> 5 <hr/>

Mary spent too much: I allow. She had no business with that pound of bacon. (*One* pound of bacon!—in *seven* days!!—among *eight* hungry stomachs!!!—including one hard-working man, and one weakly woman!!!! But never mind: the bacon was wrong.) The candles, soap, and soda were necessary. But I see you are looking grave at the six-penny-worth of tea, and the pound of salt butter. Well, strike them both off. - And now, we have reduced the amount to 7s. 8d.,—which *exceeds* the wages by *only eight pence*. But 8d. per week, amounts to 35s. in the year!

And let me tell you, my friend,—that *eating dry bread* for seven days in the week, is very dry

work ; and so you will find,—if you will try it. I think, on consideration, you must give them back their pound of salt butter,—and their two ounces of tea,—aye, and even their pound of bacon too : and allow, that *the family wants half-a-crown per week more than they have actually got*. Now, half-a-crown per week amounts to £6. 10s. *per annum*.

But the rent of Green's cottage is £2. 2s. a year. The firing, (two tons of coal, at 25s. 10d.) amounted last year to £2. 11s. 8d. Their shoes cost them £2. 3s. 11d. I have said nothing about clothes, club, and schooling. And pray,—what are they to do if any of them should fall sick ? or if Thomas *should be out of work* for a few weeks ?

Now, I have got a book full of such accounts ; and can prove that, where there is a family of little children, the labouring man cannot support himself on the actual rate of wages. But I will not multiply proofs. Remember only, that, *one with another*, you must set down a gallon of bread weekly to each inmate of a cottage ; and further, that a gallon of bread costs about 10d. Then, make up the weekly bill for the family in any way your humanity may suggest.

“But,” says the Farmer, “you are forget-

ing the men's harvest-money :—the girls' field-work :—their lace-pillow :—and the earnings of the elder boys,—who get their two or three shillings a week."

O, pardon me, I have forgotten none of these things. But the £3 or £4 gained at Harvest does not pay for rent and fuel, or rent and clothing, or rent and shoes. Beside, *the whole amount* is often due to *the Doctor*. The girls' field-work, (for which they get 4*d.* or 6*d.* a day,) sends them home at night, hungry ; and therefore requiring more food : damaged in dress also, and damaged *in soul* ; so that a careful Mother will prefer keeping her child in the cottage, to letting her go to field-work. The lace-pillow will not *support* the sickly girl, who is laying the foundation of ill health by her occupation. And all boys consume more than they earn. Ask their Mothers !

"Pray then," rejoins the Farmer,—“How *do* the labourers' families manage?”—I answer, They manage very badly. *But* for the humanity of the clergyman's wife, or daughter,—or some bountiful heart in the parish, who delights in doing good,—they would not manage at all. But even so, they manage *very badly*. They *never* know what it is to have their poor stomachs

satisfied with food. The Mother is the one who suffers most. She goes without, that the children may have the more. The Husband lives on bread, and tea! And he can *scarcely* live upon it. How *can* he? But if you would know all, go and sit beside that thin, hollow-cheeked wife, and ask her to tell you her grief: and when you hear *the honest woman* speak, you will recognise that her sorrow arises out of *the impossibility* to be honest, and live! They have never been in debt yet. But her husband's money, and Henry's, (the eldest boy,) when they "take for their fortnight," will only exactly cover the half-year's rent,—26s.: and they owe 17s. for bread. They have had "the fever" all the winter, and are "behind" in everything. However, "the baker shall be paid," she adds; "but, by the time we clear *that* off, by pinching ourselves, there will be the rent due again."

And, in the meantime, *I* am preaching patience and goodness, truthfulness and content, every Sunday; and *you* (the farmers) are exacting strict honesty all the week round! Rightly,—I allow. But remember,—it is *heroic* virtue, and *saintly* goodness, which you and I are requiring. For *I* am preaching Peace to aching hearts, and Content to empty stomachs: while

you are insisting on Honesty amid temptation, and hoping for Love at the hands of those towards whom you shew so little.

This then is my first example; which I end with an earnest prayer that you will not suppose yourself at liberty to consider only how to get your labour *as cheap as you can*.

2nd. A second example of your proneness to be *too hard towards your men*, is supplied by your treatment of them on Good-Friday. (Alas! it is useless adding Ash-Wednesday and Ascension-Day,—for *those* holy-days are all but forgotten.) However, one may add the days of National Fasting, and General Thanksgiving. On those occasions, *some* kind Farmers (to my certain knowledge) give their men a holiday, and yet make no deduction from their wages: so that the poor fellows rest from their toil, and are none the worse for it. I remember one such day well: and a happy day it was,—for the Church (for once) was full. But, my friends! O ye farmers! *why* do not these days recur more often? What sight more Christian, and more lovely, than an English Farmer in an English Church crowded with the poor labouring men and their families, whom *his* bounty,—call it *his munificence* if you will,—has brought to-

gether? The good God of Heaven lacks not worshippers in His House, for once: and ask you the reason why? Go and ask it of those honest yeomen yonder, in the pews nearest the Minister. It is *their* doing! All *their* act and deed!

And do you suppose,—Christian farmers!—that the ALMIGHTY, if you were so to act, would withhold a blessing from your crops, and from your fields, and from your cattle? Not so! He would repay your bounty seven-fold into your bosom. In the name of Heaven,—make the trial!

Nay, my friends, suffer me to ask,—since we are on the subject of Christian duties,—where is *your Lent fast?* where are *your days of self-denial?* You never hear us mention this subject in the Village Church, or you hear us allude to it only slightly; true. But you know, I suppose, that all Christian men practise *some* self-denial in the matter of meat and drink on Fridays and on fasting-days during Lent; (regulating their practice by a due regard to their health;) with a view to securing for themselves the blessedness prayed for in the Collect for the First Sunday in Lent. All this you know. Your good sense, your good feeling, will furt her suggest that if we

say little about Fasting before the labouring poor of an agricultural parish, it is, because we are preaching to empty stomachs, to poor creatures *whose whole life long is one protracted fast.*

But *to you* we speak out: and I will make bold to add to what precedes, that the way to make your fast accepted by God, is, *to show mercy to the poor*, instead of “exacting all their labours;” as one of God’s prophets has expressly taught you^a.

But, as it is, how stands the case? On Good-Friday, your Labouring Men work for you till Church-time; and again return from God’s House to their labour. Adam’s curse falls upon that day as upon all the rest; for the sweat drops from the brow of the weary peasant upon the stubborn soil, as though the day were a common one. *Who* would think that all Creation, that all things in Heaven, and Earth, and under the Earth, were engaged in celebrating the mystery of the Cross? The poor man returns weary to his home, with no gratitude to you, his employer. He lies down to rest, but offers no prayer for you and yours. Aye, and on those days,—forgive the plainness of one who has got a plain message to deliver, and who *will* deliver it while God

^a Isaiah lviii. 3.

gives him life and motion,—*you* also lie down at the close of those days, every one of you, alike unblessing *and* *unblessed*.

3rd. A third example of your being *too hard towards your people*, may be found in your modern method, (for it is quite a modern method,) of gathering in the Harvest.

From time immemorial it has been customary to regard the gleanings in Harvest as *the property of the Poor*; and therefore, as *something sacred*. One would have thought that the dictates of natural piety might have suggested the humanity and the duty of leaving on the ground, for the use of the fatherless and the widow, the ears which fell from the sickle, and which the reaper failed to gather into his arm, or bind up in sheaves. As the crumbs and the pieces of broken bread which fall from the table come not into the account of the housekeeper, so should not the loose ears of wheat or barley come into the account of the Farmer. Care should indeed be taken that, in either case, “nothing be *lost*,” but when *this* has been provided against, every requirement of prudence is abundantly satisfied.

However, the duty of reserving the gleanings, with something like religious jealousy, *for the use of CHRIST’S poor*, has not been left to

natural piety. The God of the Harvest has spoken, and spoken plainly. "When ye reap the harvest of your land," He says, "thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field ^b;" or, as in another place it is written, "*Thou shalt not make clean riddance* of the corners of thy field." "*Neither shalt thou gather ANY GLEANING of thy harvest. Thou shalt leave them unto the POOR, and to the stranger^c.*" You will observe that not only are you forbidden to glean. You are required even not *to reap your fields* too carefully. Pray notice the following remarkable place in Deuteronomy: "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast *forgotten a sheaf* in the field, *thou shalt not go again to fetch it.* It shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow." And why? Pray mark the reason which follows: "*that the Lord thy GOD may bless thee, in all the work of thine hands^d.*"

Now I will not weaken words like these by making any comment upon them. I will only ask you to consider, with what terrible eyes the LORD of the Harvest must regard *that* Farmer

^b Leviticus xix. 9, and see the next verse.

^c Leviticus xxiii. 22, and see the next verse.

^d Deuteronomy xxiv. 19, and see the two following verses.

who not only reaps with care the corners of his fields ; not only scrupulously carries away every sheaf from the ground ; but requires his men to **RAKE** the harvest-field also ! A raked harvest-field ! monstrous ! and raked, for whom ? *Not* for the Poor : but for the Farmer, and for the Farmer's pigs ! I confess I tremble for the land where such an iniquity is committed ; for an iniquity it *is*. For Heaven's sake have done with this wicked practice ! For Heaven's sake defraud not the LORD of Heaven and Earth of the portion which He claims for His poor ! Learn by heart the texts I have quoted, and teach them to your son ; and charge him to see that his son, yea, and that his son's son, learns them likewise. These words are three thousand five hundred years old, it is true ; but they burn like fire, and shine like the light. Aye, and *they will judge you* at the last day^e !

IV. Finally, I take leave to sum up under one head, certain general grounds of complaint against you. I pointed out before, certain respects wherein you appear to be *too hard* towards your men. I am about to call your attention to a few particulars, wherein I think you display *a want of liberality*.

And here, I must give the first place to the want of any systematic co-operation on your part, with the Clergyman of the Parish, and his family, in providing for the comforts, or rather for the wants,—above all, for the Education,—of the poor. The Coal-club, the Clothing-club, the School,—you leave the privilege, (for I will not call it the burden,) of providing for *all* of these, to *him*. And yet, I might call it *the burden*: for there is a limit to all earthly things;—*even to a Parson's income*. The demands upon him are far more numerous than you would suppose. His charities are far more expensive than you think. And when, (as generally is the case,) he has to work a parish single-handed, (I mean, without any resident liberal 'Squire, to help him;)—and when, also, he has a family to maintain;—it is a burden to have, first, to make up the school-master's income,—to pay the extra-teachers, to provide the school-children with books, slates, fuel,—in short, to meet all the nameless requirements of a Village School:—next, to support the village-clubs—which not only give him, or his family, immense trouble; but occasion him a large expense likewise: lastly, to find the money for *everything*, and *everybody*,—down to the very medicines for the sick, and

food for the feeble,—deprived of which, the poor must, in many instances, literally *die*.

It is easy to answer to all this, that “ Really, if the Clergyman *will* set such things on foot, he must make up his mind to *pay* for them.” This is soon said : but I do not think so vilely of any English Farmer as to believe that *he* will say it. The poor are CHRIST’S poor : a legacy bequeathed by Him to His Church^f,—for ever. They are a sacred trust. They fill a wondrous noble office. They are sent to engage our sympathy,—to make proof of our love : to maintain our sympathy with the human sufferings of HIM who came down from Heaven, took our nature upon HIM, and died for our unworthy sake,—to make trial of the sincerity of our love towards HIMSELF^g. They must not be suffered to grow up without Education,—by which I mean, *the Knowledge and the Fear of GOD*. They may not be suffered to perish, in the bitter wintry weather ; and shiver over a cold hearth. Neither may they go, in Scripture language, *naked*. They may not,—*because they are CHRIST’S poor*. If I seem talking riddles, I beg to refer you to St.

^f Compare Deuteronomy xv. 11. with St. Mark xiv. 7. and St. John xii. 8.

^g St. Matthew xxv. 34—40, indeed, to the end of the chapter. See also, by all means, Proverbs xix. 17.

Matthew xxv. 34—40, and request to know how you would expound that place of Scripture.

Now, though I do not purpose to dwell at any length on the great Benefits you would reap indirectly from the more liberal course which I have been recommending; yet, so important a part of the question may not pass without a few words. Above all things, by acting in concert with the Clergyman in promoting the religious Education of the people, you would be pursuing a course which would operate more effectually than any other, *to prevent Crime*. You must, as much as you can, remove *Temptation* out of the way of persons whom you desire to keep from *Sin*. You must therefore do all in your power,—not only to screen your people from the pressure of extreme want, but, (what is my present subject,)—to check idleness among them also: and let me assure you that the seeds of future crime are most successfully sown in those idle habits which are fostered in boyhood; on Farms, I mean, where no anxiety is shown, on Sundays or week-days, about the education of the children employed on the premises.

Next to removing temptation out of the way of your labouring Poor, comes the duty of fortifying them with sound religious teaching. We

are shocked at the degradation of her who becomes a Mother before she is a Wife ;—but what pains do we take to build up our peasantry, *as we would our own children*, with severe notions of virtue,—purity,—personal sanctity? I plead not for the toleration of so monstrous an offence on the part of our agricultural poor : (God knoweth !). But I ask you,—Does not *the blame* of it lie at *your* door? I think it does. On *their* side, I see extreme ignorance,—the very worst example,—a life-long familiarity with grossness,—strong temptations, from within and from without :—on *yours*, I see *utter neglect* till the sin has been committed and is detected,—contempt and punishment ever after. In some Villages again, the rights of property are not respected : in plain terms, every other man will steal, upon occasion. And whose fault is it? *Theirs*, who have been suffered to grow up with the very loosest notions of Right and Wrong? Or *yours*, who have suffered them to grow up in those notions? Which? But, (to conclude this part of the subject,) the benefits of careful training, as seen in a Village, are incalculably precious. The dirty hovel becomes transformed into the decent dwelling. The quarrelsome and noisy interior becomes the scene of Peace and Love. The brutal manners,

and rough bearing,—the sulky scowl, and surly answer,—are all but unknown. Crimes are regarded by the little community as offences committed against themselves : and Drunkenness and Sabbath-breaking are regarded by them as crimes. There may be great poverty among them, but there will be little disgrace : and much hardship, but a wondrous amount of contentment. Lastly, depend upon it, depend upon it, the prayers of such persons rise up night and morning, like incense, before the LORD of Heaven and Earth, and call down a blessing on the village they inhabit,—a blessing on themselves, AND ON YOU.

With what object, then, have I entered into these details? With a view to engage you in *a system of more active benevolence* towards your labouring Poor, and their families. I invite you to give liberally of your substance, to give liberally also of your time, in the promotion of the good work which the Clergyman has in hand, and which presses with undue severity on *him*. And this, because it is *your duty* so to do : and further, because by so doing, you will be securing your own truest happiness ; promoting your own best welfare.

Do not think me unreasonable. I am not insisting (as I might and ought) on the duty of

your giving *at least a tenth* of your gains to God, who gives you everything. What I at present recommend, is only that you should offer to subscribe *something*, yearly, to each of the local charities which your parish-priest is at present conducting single-handed. Go to him, and ask leave to share his privilege. Aye, *insist* upon sharing his blessing. Offer to help him at the school. Come and teach some of the boys every Sunday, and let them learn to respect you. Lend your carts to carry the coal; and at least, stand by when the clothing is being distributed. Let the people *see* that you take an interest in their welfare: let them learn to *love* you!

I have written so fully on this head,—(forgive, I beg, the earnestness of one who is in earnest in loving the Poor,)—I have already been so lengthy, that I will not make any remarks on the obvious comfort, (the comfort *to one's-self*, I mean,) of sending sometimes to a poor, and especially to a sickly neighbour, a portion from one's own table; and I am sure I need not suggest the kindness of seeing that the weakly child of a labouring man suffers not for the lack of a little milk, even though the pigs (*the pigs!*) must therefore enjoy the less. So much has been already said, that I care not to dwell on

the habitually unkind way which *some* of you have of speaking of, and to, the labouring folk ; as if they were a lazy, thankless, discontented thievish set ; instead of being, (what indeed they really are,) the very salt of the earth, and the prime ornament of God's Creation. No ! Nor do I again say anything of the unwillingness which I have known in some places, to let one of this class keep any live creature ;—on the heartless plea that it would only tempt the man to steal ; or the untrue plea, that it would do him *no good* to be allowed to keep it. But what I *must* remark upon, is, the evil eye with which some of you seem to look upon everything which tends to the comfort and *independence* of those beneath you. I cannot understand it. I would implore you, as Christian men, to try and come to a better mind on this subject. I appeal not to your Patriotism ;—nor will remind you that the sturdy spirit of English independence, is, under God, the true bulwark of this land : the safeguard of your property and of yourselves. I appeal to your humanity ; to our common brotherhood in CHRIST ; to the great truth that we are, every one of us, “ *members one of another* ^h.”

Here then, I cease. I have said the thing

^h Romans xii. 4, 5.

I wanted. It is the glory of Englishmen that they love plain speaking. It is *the duty* of Christian men to say the thing they mean, if it be but a right and a good thing which they mean : and what I have been saying is both right and good. “ Judge ye what I say.”

Not a word more, then, shall be added in the way of complaint. A few words of kindness,—to ensure, if possible, a cordial parting,—are all that I will add : pleasanter words to write, believe me, than words of blame !

My friends,—(for, as friends I am *determined* to regard you,)—I cannot believe that all the faults I have been enumerating are the result of cool deliberate purpose. I will never believe that an English Farmer *intends* the discomfort, and distress of his Labourers : their systematic violation of the Christian Sabbath : their domestic hardships, and even their bodily want. He bears no ill-will to the Church’s Days of greatest solemnity ; nor thinks of doing despite to God’s commands, when he rakes the Harvest-field. He is not conscious of the extent of his illiberality ; nor has ever given the question of parochial responsibility, fair consideration. I am *sure* that the faults I have been enumerating are partly, oversight ; partly, the result of long habit ;

partly, faults you are conscious of, and willing to correct. We are all apt to act in this manner. We do not weigh the consequences of all our actions. We do, as we have been accustomed,—or after the example of our neighbours,—or even, as we mean, some day, *to leave off doing*. Any how, I persuade myself that if you have recognised your own picture in any part of what has gone before, you will allow that there is room for amendment. Nay, I persuade myself that you *will* amend. So well do I think of you.

One thing which I am sure of, is,—that, although the reading of what I have written may make you feel rather angry at first, you will be grateful to me for my plain speaking, some of these days; if it induces you to alter your practice. When you are laying your head on your dying pillow, you will be comforted by the thought that when you were admonished, you were humble; and made those changes in the management of your Farm which enabled your labourers to lay out their scanty wages to the best advantage; enabled your farm-servants to go to Church, and keep the Sunday holy; enabled all *to live*. Consult with your wives, with your sons, with your daughters. Resolve, any how, that the thing *shall be done*; and—*do it*.

Even the *immediate* benefits you would derive from such a course, would be incalculable. I say nothing of the approving voice of Conscience. I say nothing of the fund of Peace and Joy which you would be hiving in your own bosoms. The sunshine within, would be only a fraction of the sunshine without. Meantime, what countless advantages would follow, on every side! The love and affection of your poorer neighbours; their willing services; their increased faithfulness and diligence; their hearty obedience: add to this, what I have already dwelt upon at so much length,—the diminution of crime;—all these things make up, I say, a great reward; a thing worth struggling for. O, how little do you know what a glorious destiny might be yours, could you but realize the opportunities, the responsibilities, the advantage of your position as Farmers in a Christian country! You might be the right-hand of the Church; you might be doing God's work on Earth, as effectually as one of His appointed Ministers; you might rule a hundred hearts by love; you might be the delight, the pride, the ornament of the Village where God has appointed your dwelling!

But, look not to Time; look to *Eternity*, if you would know the true value of such a course as I

have been recommending. Think of Death and Judgment, if you would see any matter—and *this* among the rest—in its true light. The day is coming, the day is close at hand, when you will stand before God,—side by side with those same labouring men, the sweat of whose brow has so many a time fallen on your furrows. And be persuaded, that if they have groaned beneath a burden which you *might* have lightened, but *would* not; if Sunday was no Sabbath to them, and the fault was *yours*; if there were hardships, and if there was want, and if there was bitterness of soul; *you* the cause of that bitterness, that hardship, and that want;—trust me, sirs! you would gladly in “the great and terrible day,” exchange places with the veriest wretch who ever earned a sorry pittance by the sweat of his brow. You will not know where to hide your faces. You will abhor yourselves; and (God forbid!) you will be abhorred.

Be wise while you may! There is yet time! Life and Health are yet yours. It is either Seed-time, or it is Harvest; Winter or Summer; the Autumn or the Spring of the Year. Every Season brings its duties; and, with them, its temptations also. What will you do:—Go on in the old course,—or remodel your conduct? Lay down this

A FEW WORDS TO THE FARMERS.

Letter, till “a convenient season;” or act upon its suggestions, *at once?* . . . O let it be the latter course!—Take, I beseech you, what you have just read in the same loving spirit in which it was written; and believe that it came, every word of it, from the heart of

**YOUR FAITHFUL SERVANT, AND
YOUR TRUE FRIEND.**

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORSE.

OH, I'm a miserable woman, that I am! a poor worn-out drudge! quite a slave! scrubbing and rubbing, toiling and moiling in all manner of dirt and sorrow! As soon as one set of lodgers is gone, another coming in! No peace, no respite! And 'Tom out all day, aye, and often half the night too, with his boat! No help in carrying the water, nor in beating the carpets! And little 'Tom fretting so with his teeth! Oh it's a miserable world, and this is a miserable place, and I'm a miserable woman! What a fool I was to leave Ashton Hall, and . . . there's the kettle boiling over!

So did Ellen Day bemoan her lot; and while she runs down stairs to look after the kettle, the reader shall be made acquainted with the nature of Ellen's misfortunes. Like many other people, she had so few real troubles that she was disposed to indulge herself in imaginary ones. She had allowed herself to complain so much about trifles, that without being aware of it, she had grown very discontented, and was making her-

self, and every one who had to do with her, uncomfortable.

Now that she was no longer in service, she was continually comparing her present condition with what it had been at Ashton Hall; all the while she was there, she was always full of misfortunes. It was too hot, or too cold, or the place did not agree with her; or the country was so dull; or she had engaged herself for a nursery-maid's place, while her talent was in the kitchen; in short, every thing went the wrong way, and nobody, according to her way of thinking, had ever so many troubles and vexations as herself. Her chief consolation was in pitying herself, and in looking forward to a future when she should be her own mistress, and have her own way, and then nothing would go wrong, and nobody would cross her. "Service is no inheritance," she would say, "that's my only comfort. If I were but settled for life I should be happy."

And before very long she was settled for life. About two years before the events which we are about to record took place, the family from Ashton Hall moved for the summer season to the sea-side, and took up their abode at Winterbourne, which, as all the world knows, is one of the most delightful spots on the Sussex coast, a

bright sheltered nook, in a little bay or rather cove of its own, with a long row of villa-residences built at the foot of a lofty cliff, and with a wide expanse of firm white sand in front.

Being a good fishing-station, there are plenty of boats, and where there are boats there must be men to manage them. The Ashton children passed a good deal of time on the water, and it was soon observed that a certain Tom Day had acquired the exclusive privilege of carrying the young Ashtons out to sea, and further, that when he came up to Sea View House for orders, Ellen Mason was seldom out of the way. A fine, sturdy, good-looking fellow was Tom, with a merry laughing eye, and an honest, open, sailor-like countenance; I suppose Ellen thought he seemed like one, who, if he had a wife, would know how to take care of her: and, as soon as he dared, Tom let out that he was pretty well to do in the world, and every year was doing better; that Winterbourne was a growing place; that a lodging-house (and there were one or two of them on sale) would be a safe investment for money, and that if he could but find a wife to take charge of it, he should be a happy man. And if, in addition to all this, he told Ellen that he admired her more than any one he had ever

seen, and that he was over head and ears in love with her, he said no more than he felt, and than he had good cause to say, for barring a slight shade of discontent which now and then passed over her face, Ellen was a very pretty girl, and what is more to the purpose, a well-principled and well-disposed one ; so that, when upon enquiry and further knowledge, she was satisfied that Tom was a good man, and likely to make a kind husband, she contrived to let him know that she did not care how soon Ellen Mason became Ellen Day.

The autumn of that year had not passed into winter, before the young Ashtons had gone home with a new nursery maid, and Ellen's savings were helping to furnish "Sunny Nook" (so the new purchase was called) with beds and carpets, tables and chairs.

It was well named Sunny Nook ; for its full southern aspect, and the lofty elms on either side of it, and the high cliff at the back, made Tom Day's villa the warmest and most sheltered lodging-house at Winterbourne. In its garden the myrtle and scarlet geranium lived through the winter, and the blue passion-flower hung in festoons from pillar to pillar in the little verandah.

It had all that nature could give it to make it a bright and sunny dwelling; but unless we have sunshine in our own breasts, our outward blessings are given us in vain.

Through every season of the year, Tom Day's house had a succession of lodgers, and each family as they quitted it expressed to Ellen the wish that they could always live in such a pleasant place, and congratulated her on having her lot in life cast there. At first she would blush and smile, and her eyes would sparkle at the consciousness of her happiness. "Yes," and she thanked God for it, "she had a good husband, and they were doing well, and it was a beautiful place, and they had every thing to be grateful for." By and by, she used the same words, but they seemed like a mere form, and as if they did not come from her heart; there was no smile, and her eyes did not sparkle. At the year's end, she "was sure she was very glad if the family were satisfied, but all places were very much the same to her."

On the morning of the day on which our tale commences, she had received the farewells of her last lodgers with a curtsey, and their praises of Sunny Nook with a sigh of resignation.

The black spot had spread. A casual infir-

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORSE.

mity of temper was growing into a confirmed habit. No resistance had been made to the tempter, and the poison of the sin of discontent was spreading through Ellen's whole character, and making herself and her husband wretched. Without being aware of it herself, she was growing peevish and complaining, and without a trouble in the world save those of her own making, was fond of talking as though fortune had a spite at her, and as if she had "worse luck than any-body."

A sharp fit of the toothache would have been a positive blessing to her, if it had befallen her in the first month of her marriage. The fact was that she was really too happy; she had a husband who doted on her, and made every thing smooth to her. It is a sad thing to say, but her very mercies had made her ungrateful. So true is it that the safest and least dangerous path for a Christian, is one in which all things do not go well with him. So needful is it for our own personal happiness, no less than for our spiritual advancement and growth in God's favour, that we should obey the injunction of our blessed Lord, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." We all need a daily

cross ; and if we do not find crosses ready provided for us, we had better make them than be without them. Only, if we desire a blessing on them, we must take good heed what the materials are from which we make them. We may make our crosses out of self-indulgence, (as poor Ellen did;) Scripture teaches us to make them out of self-denial. And we must remember this too, that we have no right to make crosses for others.

Ellen's infirmity had been a sore cross to her husband. For a long while he could not understand how it could be that such little matters as she declared to be the sources of her vexation, could be a trouble to any-body. At first he tried to laugh her out of it, but he soon found that this would not do. Then with ready good humour, he endeavoured to lighten her domestic labours, or whatever happened to be the cause of her trouble, by undertaking them, so far as he could, himself. Many a job in house and kitchen did he do, which never fisherman was seen to do before. His neighbours laughed at him, and told him he was spoiling a good wife ; his wife laughed at him, and told him that his fingers were thumbs ; but little cared he what was said, if only he could see her happy, and not hear her incessantly complaining.

However it was all to no purpose ; and when Tom found that in spite of all his efforts to make her comfortable, Ellen still persisted in talking as if she were a miserable woman, he began to grow callous to her imaginary miseries. Certainly it made his home very uncomfortable at times ; but (so he consoled himself) “ it was only her way ; ” and he was determined not to mind it. So when she began to complain, he put his hands in his pockets and began to whistle, or put his hat on his head, and went down to his boat. This did not mend matters : and by degrees the way was preparing for that miserable state of things in which husband and wife are glad to escape from each other’s presence, instead of finding mutual society, help, and comfort. Ellen grew more peevish and complaining ; and Tom became indifferent to his home and to all things connected with it. He was happier when buffeting with the winds and waves, than at his own fireside ; and Ellen was happy no where ; and this, simply because she had given way to a discontented spirit, which grew upon her more and more, and at times persuaded her that her very life was a burden to her.

The kettle, which, by boiling over, had interrupted the course of Ellen’s lamentation, was

speedily removed from the fire, and the work of preparing her house for fresh lodgers proceeded. Even in her grumbling, Ellen had a pride in her house, and unknown to herself, she had a great deal more interest in it, and every thing connected with it, than she believed herself to have.

Grumbling had become a habit to her, and so as soon as she resumed her work, she resumed her grumbling. Yet it was not without a feeling of satisfaction that she looked upon her pretty parlour, when the labours of the broom and duster were concluded.

“It is a neat little place, I will say that for it, when it’s properly cleaned up. There s some comfort in seeing a house look as it should, tho’ I’m worn to death with cleaning it. Dear! dear! if I lived any where but in a lodging house, how happy I should be! But these lodgers, coming in one after another, they’re always making some mess or another, and never think of the trouble they give. And the sea, that’s another thing, as bad or worse than the lodgers: it spoils every thing, and fades every thing, and wets every thing. Who would have thought that it is only a week ago since I cleaned these windows, and now,—ugh! one can hardly see through them for the salt on the glass!” So saying, she threw

open the folding doors which opened out into the garden, and began to clean the windows. "Never saw such a mess in my life! Who would ever have thought I should have to take to window-cleaning? I'm sure I never cleaned windows at Ashton Hall. What a fool I was to leave it! What could have tempted me to come here?"

"Why, you fell in love with me, and couldn't help yourself, you know," said a good-natured voice behind her.

Ellen could hardly resist a smile in spite of herself, and the tone of her husband brought back a vision of days that had long passed away.

"I wish you would not make one jump so, Tom, I thought you were going out fishing."

"So I was, and so I am, but I ran home just to get my glass, and take a look at that schooner there."

"Did you never see a schooner before?"

"She's Dutch built, that's evident," observed Tom to himself, as he gazed through his telescope, without paying much attention to what his wife was saying, "and if the haze would clear away a bit, I should see more of her."

"Why, what's the matter with her?"

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“I don’t know that any thing is the matter with her, but I can’t understand why she keeps beating about in that strange way, nor what her people are doing.”

There was something about her which was puzzling to Tom’s nautical experience. At last he said in an unsatisfied tone, “may be they are waiting for a pilot,” and he shut up his glass, but instead of taking it into the house, he put it into his pocket.

“Can I do any thing for you, Nelly, before I go?” he asked, addressing himself to his wife.

“No, thank you, Tom. You have left me to do every thing by myself, and now, when all’s done, you offer to help me. There are only the windows to be cleaned, and you can’t do that, for you would break every square you touched. If there’s a thing on the face of the earth I hate, it’s window cleaning.”

“Why do you clean them so often then?”

“Because, if I don’t, the lodgers will grumble.”

“Let ’em grumble,” said Tom, “don’t worry yourself about the windows; when they’re dirtiest, they are cleaner than at the other lodging-houses, I’m sure.”

“Of course they are. You wouldn’t have

your house like Hogg's lodging, would you? People never stay there more than a day or two, because of the dirt."

"Well, then, don't clean these windows till you're rested."

"Rested!" exclaimed Mrs. Day, in a very injured tone, "I'm sure there's no rest for me, Tom. I've never known rest since I left Ashton Hall, and as for having rest ever again, till I'm in my coffin, the thing's impossible."

And then to shew how impossible it was that she ever could have rest, she began to clean a large pane so vigorously, that in a moment her cloth went through it, and the glass was shivered to pieces.

"Are you hurt? Have you cut yourself?" cried Tom, with great earnestness.

"Cut myself? no; but there will be five shillings to pay the glazier, if there's a farthing."

"It might have been worse," said Tom, greatly relieved, "we might have had to pay the surgeon. Never mind the glass."

"'Never mind the glass,' and 'it might have been worse!' Why, Tom, you'd make one think you were a fool, by the way you go on at times. I do believe I'm the unluckiest creature that ever was born! Don't you know there are new

lodgers coming in to-night, and don't you know there's not a glazier within four miles of us? And then to go and say, '*It might have been worse.*' You're enough to provoke a saint, Tom."

It was well for both parties that the conversation was here brought to a sudden stop. Had it proceeded further, the quarrel which seemed to have been long impending, would have been the result. Day was wearied out with his wife's fretfulness, and her womanly pride was piqued that she could no longer exert the same influence over her husband now with frowns, as formerly with smiles.

Hurt and angry at Ellen's hasty words, he had turned away from her, and was in the act of taking the path which led out of the garden to the sea-shore, when once more his attention was rivetted to the schooner, which was now rapidly approaching the shore with all her sails set. A fresh wind was blowing, and during the short time in which Tom had been talking to his wife, the vessel had come full into sight.

The careless whistle which had been commenced with the view of hiding deeper feelings, stopped in a moment. The telescope was raised, as suddenly let fall, and then in a voice which was choked with agitation, the fisherman ex-

claimed, "Oh Ellen, Ellen, look out yonder ! As sure as there is a heaven above us, that vessel is on fire, and the poor fellows are running her ashore to save their lives !"

"On fire !" cried Ellen, darting up, and forgetting in a moment all her silly pique, "where, where ? I see no fire."

"No, no, that's yet to come, but you see the smoke, don't you, driving across the sails ? you see how they're steering the vessel, don't you ? Would they steer her so in broad day-light, knowing as they must that in five minutes' time they will be aground within fifty yards of our cliffs, if they had any hope of saving their own lives by any other means ?"

It was but too evident : even while he spoke the mass of smoke surrounding the ill-fated vessel grew thicker and thicker. The hatches had been fastened down to prevent the approach of air to the flames, and to retard the progress of ignition ; but it was a question of time, that was all, when the fiery element would burst forth. Without saying another word, the husband and wife ran out of their garden, and in a minute more were upon the beach, whither (for the alarm was already given) their neighbours were hastening.

It was about noon: but the month was November, and heavy clouds were drifting across the sky, and obscuring the sun, which, however, gleamed forth at intervals. The tide was going down, and the firm white sands were thronged with the population of the little village.

Nearer and nearer came the vessel, and every instant the smoke, black as ink, poured forth in denser masses from every cranny of escape, eddying round the white sails, spreading over and obscuring the deck, and then, stretching out in a long, low line above the waters, darkened both sea and land.

Nearer and nearer it came, and gradually, as it approached, was heard a sound which still grew louder and louder, till it rose above the howling of the wind, and the tumult of the waters dashing over a line of rocks in the immediate neighbourhood. It was the angry roaring of the pent-up flames, writhing and struggling to burst forth, raging like wild beasts, greedy of a prey, which some obstacle detains for a moment from their grasp.

The squall increased; down came the rain in torrents; but the anxious crowd upon the shore stood motionless, one sight in their eyes, the fated vessel, one sound in their ears, a sound

which rung in them for weeks after, the indignant bellowing of the baffled fire.

Baffled for a short space only! for at the moment she grounded, the force and shock of her keel cutting its way into the sand and then meeting a sudden and complete resistance to all further progress, seemed to have the effect of causing the timbers to gape, and of removing every obstacle which hitherto had hindered the visible ascent of the flames. Within a minute the whole space about her stern was a mass of fire, lapping up every object within its reach, curling round the masts, running in tongues of flame among the rigging, darting like balls of fire from point to point, till every part and portion of the schooner was wrapped in fearful conflagration. The rain continued to fall heavily, the waves beat over the ship, but not the slightest check appeared to be given to the devouring element. For a brief space the fire was less bright, for the wind was now veering about continually, and sweeping in eddies round the vessel carried the smoke with it, and obscured every object. So things continued for a quarter of an hour or more, and then the wind having shifted and blowing steadily off the land, the progress of the fire became visible once more. By and by

there was a loud explosion, which caused the affrighted crowd to hurry away in all directions ; then another, and another, and then some portion of the stern gave way, and there issued from the opening a cataract of liquid fire, which ran over the sands, (for by this time the retreating tide had left the vessel stranded,) rolled through a low barrier of rocks and sea-weed, till it forced its way into the sea, with which it appeared to mingle without being extinguished. And no wonder ! for the cargo had consisted of hundreds of barrels of turpentine and rosin. In a short time the heat and glare of the flames was so insupportable, that none could approach the fatal spot within many yards. All attempts at extinguishing the fire were hopeless, to save any thing was impossible, and the crowd of villagers could only gaze upon jets of white, and green, and ruddy flames, and a cloud of inky smoke which stretched out to sea for miles, till the returning tide swept over a few charred and hissing timbers, which were all that then remained of the good ship "Rebecca."

And what meanwhile had been the fate of the crew ? By God's great mercy, not one of them perished. Though scorched, and almost suffocated by the dense fumes of the turpentine, they

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and who with Tom Day and others, were condoling with the sufferers on their misfortune, 'We must submit,' he said, in such broken English as he could muster, "things might have been worse."

"Well, master," said Tom, "there are not many men, I reckon, who would think of that, if they found themselves in your condition."

"Nay, my friend," rejoined the captain, "things are bad enough, and we have had a bad time together, but our good God has not forgotten us. We have had yellow fever on board since we left America, but only one of the crew died. Our ship might have taken fire in the midst of the Atlantic, and then we should have all perished. Nay, if it had happened only yesterday, there was such a fog off your coast, that the chances would have been all against us. Oh, it might have been worse! The ship might not have been insured, but, thank God, she is, so my poor wife and children will not be beggared. We might have run her among rocks, and been dashed to pieces in trying to land. We might have landed among men who would be more disposed to plunder than to help us. Oh indeed, good friends, we have much to be thankful for. Bad as things are, they might have been worse!"

“I can’t get those poor fellows out of my head,” said Tom Day to his wife, as late in the afternoon he stood with her in the garden of their quiet home. The wind had lulled, the rain had just ceased, the heavy clouds were passing away, the sun was breaking forth with a mild evening glow, and a bright rainbow spanning the heavens, interrupted only in one spot by a mass of black rolling smoke. “I can’t get those poor fellows out of my head, I wish I could.”

“Do you?” replied Ellen. “Well, I hope that I shall remember them to the longest day I live. Oh Tom, Tom! how ashamed of myself I feel! what a thankless, ungrateful wretch I have been! I have been making miseries of my very mercies, while they have found blessings in their terrible misfortune. Oh, dear Tom, forgive me. Help me, pray for me; when you see me giving way to my besetting sin, remind me of yonder smoking wreck, and I think by God’s grace, the recollection will not come into my mind in vain!”

And it did not? And in a year’s time Sunny Nook was once more the happiest home, and Tom Day the happiest man in Winterbourne.

THE CLOUD UPON THE MOUNTAIN.

AN ALLEGORY.

I WAS a stranger in a strange land. Indeed I am still a stranger and a sojourner as all my fathers were. In that confession I declare plainly that I seek a country. I am a wayfaring man, a wanderer, a pilgrim far from my home; and on that plea, since I have no abiding city here, I ground my appeal to the charity of those among whom I dwell, that when my time of need comes, they would grant me, for such a season as I may need it, the only possession I shall ever ask at their hands, the possession of a burying-place.

It is toward evening, and the day is far spent. Few and evil have been the hours of my pilgrimage. Thankfully do I see around me unerring tokens that I am approaching my journey's end. I have yet a dark and dreary valley to cross, but my path hath long wound along the base of lofty mountains. I have walked through the vale of misery, and used it for a

well, yea, and have found its waters, though bitter, healthful. And now, though the deep and perilous abyss which yet remains to be passed, is, I am well aware, the awfulest and most terrible in all the universe of God, still I would fear no evil. I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have entrusted unto Him against that day. To Him I have committed the keeping of my soul in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. And my faith tells me that in that day He will commit His rod and staff to me to comfort me. I am confident that He which hath begun a good work in me, who in His mercy made me His child, and who in His pity hath led me these many years in the wilderness, to humble me, and to prove me, and to know what is in mine heart, whether I would keep His commandments or no—I am confident that He which hath begun a good work in me, will perform it unto the end, if only I be not wanting to myself.

I have been a stranger in strange lands, and it is ever the way with strangers to be struck with, and to mark circumstances and customs, which are not noticed, or are passed over by natives as matters too common to be thought about or commented upon. It may be that the

scenes and events which I am about to record, are an every-day sight in the land wherein I have been sojourning. I suppose this is the case, for I observed that none but myself stood to contemplate them ; and this, methinks, could hardly have been the case, had the deep meaning of all that passed before me presented itself as strongly to the minds of others, as it did to my own. Use, no doubt, had deadened their perceptions, so that had I spoken to them of what was passing before their eyes, they would probably have said that I had put a visionary interpretation upon it, or that, like other travellers, I had been led astray by hasty impressions, and drawn my conclusions from insufficient grounds.

Perhaps it may have been so. But whether a sight which I saw of late in my wanderings was altogether such as it might have appeared to an indifferent spectator, or whether it had not in it more than met the careless eye ; whether there did not lie beneath the surface, deep spiritual meanings, types of truth, lessons of heavenly wisdom, and awful warnings, let the reader judge.

I sat alone upon the summit of a vast fragment of rock, which, in some convulsion of nature, had been hurled from the mountain above, and had found a resting-place half-way between

the summit of the steep, and the waves which washed its base. It was a huge isolated crag, standing boldly out amidst a wilderness of confused masses of stone; for the scene around was one of ruin. Passing fair it was, for the growth of underwood, the spread of creepers, the colour and luxuriance of wild flowers, had done much in the lapse of ages to mask, at least to the casual passer-by, the desolation which must have ensued, when the work of creation was marred, and the grassy slopes and verdant thickets had been upturned from their base, by the sudden catastrophe which converted a garden into a wild and desolate wilderness of barren rocks and treacherous quagmires. The marshy spots seemed now, in the lapse of ages, and when viewed from a distance, to be clothed with healthy verdure, and the deep and dangerous chasms and fissures were, for the most part, concealed by tussocks of the hart's-tongue fern, or wreathed over with festoons of the bryony or clematis.

The ascent to the crag which I had chosen for my temporary resting-place, was rendered easy on one side by a flight of natural steps formed by the shelving layers or beds of stone, which had been thus irregularly wrenched from their original site. On its summit was a flat space

covered with a soft carpet of turf and thyme, while in a cleft on one side a stunted maple had found means to insert its roots, and grow to a sufficient size to form a leafy canopy above me.

Here, therefore, being wearied with my journey, I sat upon the crag, and gazed upon the scene around me. Hour after hour, I fear, passed by, and found me still in idleness. It was not a place in which to be overtaken by night-fall; but I was faint and foot-sore, and this indisposed me for exertion, and thoughts of the past, the present, and the future, so crowded themselves upon me, that I took no note of time.

How long I had sat contemplating the scene before me I know not, but suddenly I heard a voice addressing me and saying, "Stranger, what seest thou?" I started, for the sound was close to me, and I gazed around, but there was no one in sight. "Who speaks?" I cried, but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. I listened, but all was still.

Once more I sank back into my former position, and gazed intently on the ocean.

"Stranger, what seest thou?" again inquired the voice; clear and distinct, yet soft, and so close to me that the speaker seemed at my very side. Was it an angel that spake to me, or

was it that voice from within, which sometimes utters its words with such distinctness that it mocks the outward senses, and makes us, as it seems, to hear with our outward ears, what only exists in our inward imaginations? I know not; I cannot tell; but at the time I believed I was in the presence of an unseen companion, and with a strange absence of fear, which afterwards seemed wholly unaccountable to me, thus I answered;

“Before me lies a smooth and ample terrace, in the midst of which is a broad and well-worn road, an easy path, I ween, for them that travel on it. By its side grow flowers bright and gay, and here and there are quiet resting-places, seats of rock, embowered under canopies of woodbine, and traveller’s joy.”

And methought the voice answered again unto me, and said, “It is even so: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. What more seest thou?”

“The terrace extendeth but to the cliff; down the cliff there is a steep winding path which communicates with the sea: then comes the pebbly shore, and then the swelling waves, and beyond these I see nought, for a mist is resting on the surface of the distant ocean.”

“ Now turn thee, and look behind thee,” said the voice.

Then I arose, and stood upright on my feet, and when I had gazed awhile I replied, “ That is my course homeward. I know it, for in character it is like the road I have already trodden. It is very steep. It winds amid deep gaping cracks in the soil, into which if a man fall, he can hardly escape unmaimed. It follows a devious, though ever-ascending course amid the crags ; now it seems to go through dark thickets of thorns and briars, and now to lie across a peaty swamp. One while, the track seems lost amid broken fragments of stone ; at another, to diverge into a score of paths which grow fainter and fainter till they are wholly lost. Yet there is one path, which, as I gaze on it from hence, I see to be the right one ; it is but as a thread on the mountain’s side ; it is steeper than all the rest ; so steep that I think none could look back from it without being in danger of falling : it ascends higher and higher till it reaches the gap, which is the entry into that pass, which, as I trust and believe, will bring me to my home.”

“ Can you see what lies beyond the gap ?” asked the voice of the Unseen.

THE CLOUD UPON THE MOUNTAIN.

“No,” I answered with a sigh.

“Why not?” rejoined the speaker.

“Because there is a cloud upon the mountain.”

“See you aught peculiar in that cloud?”

“Yes, it is never at rest. It never clears away from the mountain-top; it shrouds the pass perpetually. Now and then the wind seems to drift it for a moment from before the face of the gap, or to disperse its substance partially, and then its edges are fringed with light as though the sun were close behind it, but anon the mist thickens, and shifts its place with every eddying gust. Occasionally it will descend rapidly and cover the greater part of the mountain side, then it will be seen hovering over one spot, then over another; but it seems to come down most rapidly, and hang most densely over that portion of the ascent where the tracks are most divided. Alas for those who are overtaken by it, when they have thus wandered from the right way, for they will never be able to find it more.”

Sternly yet sadly replied the voice, “Never, never! Yet none need so perish. Those who do perish, perish only because they love to wander, and will not refrain their feet. Have they not read, have they not heard the solemn warning; ‘Give glory to the Lord your God, before He

cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness.'”

I was too awe-struck to make an immediate answer, and so, for some brief space, there was silence, interrupted only by the whispering of the wind in the leaves of the tree above me, and the echo of the distant waves as they broke upon the shore. I stood motionless; for all things round me had acquired a significance which they had not possessed before, and I meditated with myself how I could learn the art of interpreting them.

The viewless speaker seemed to have divined my thoughts, for once more his voice was heard.

“Understandest thou what thou seest?”

“I desire to do so,” was my reply, “but I fear me I am dull of sight to see, and slow of heart to understand. The thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and our devices are but uncertain. For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things. And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us; but

the things that are in heaven, who hath searched out ?”

“Humility,” answered the voice, “is the mother of all graces. To know the weakness of your sight is, so far, a safeguard against stumbling. It is only the wilfully blind, who seeing sees not ; it is only the presumptuous, who, making his boast of seeing, is left to grope in darkness. Be watchful, be circumspect ; look within ; study thine own heart ; prove its secret workings. And then you may in safety look out on the world around you ; and the common things of life, which to others are dumb, will speak wisdom to you. And you will read in them, as in a mirror, your own spiritual state. Their types, and shadows, and similitudes, will serve to shew you what you are, and where you are, will help you to see yourself as others see you. Stand here, therefore, for a while, and watch, and it shall be even as I have said.”

Then the voice ceased, and I felt within myself that I was in solitude.

And I stood upon the verge of the jutting orag, and looked out towards the sea. And behold, there issued from the soft mist, which, at some little distance from the shore, moved upon the face of the waters, a large boat crowded with

many boys, and steered by one who seemed to have the charge of them.

As they neared the shore I perceived that they began to strip off their clothes, and one by one, keeping hold of their guardian's hand, they were plunged for a moment beneath the waves. And the sun burst forth from a cloud, and shone on them with all his brightness, as, fresh and glowing from the salutary waters, they regained the vessel. And the echo of their happy voices was as music in my ears, as they put on their holyday attire, clean and bright, and clustered round the venerable old man, who laid his finger on the brow of each, and then with anxious looks and earnest gestures pointed out to them the track on the steep hill-side, the intricacies of the path, the dangers of the cloud that hung upon the mountain-top, and the gap at the summit which led to the hidden district beyond.

Then the boat drew nearer to the beach to land its crew, and the terrace in front of me hid it from my eyes, and I saw it and its steerer no more. But as I gazed upon the shadowy mist and the rippling waves, and thought of those who had so lately emerged from them, and of those who in the days of old were under the cloud, and passed through the sea, I remembered how

I myself had been under the water of the font, and how thence I had emerged cleansed and purified, a new creature, born again ; how I had gone down into the water a child of death, and had come up a child of the resurrection ; how I had gone down a child of wrath, and had come up a child of mercy ; how I had gone down a child of the devil, and had come up a child of God ; how that I had there, as it were, been buried and had risen again, buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so I also should walk in newness of life. High and holy had been my calling, great and glorious had been my privileges ; how had I listened to the one, and used the other ?

Thus I was beginning to question with myself, when the sound of approaching voices called off my attention to the scene before me. Those who had so lately occupied the boat, were now beginning to appear one by one, winding their way up the cliff, and making for the terrace in front of me. When I had first seen them in the distance they had seemed to me mere children ; as they approached nearer to me I saw that they were youths ; and strange to tell, when afterwards they passed me, and ascended the

face of the mountain, whether it was from the weariness of their limbs, I know not, or from some effect of distance, the nearest to me looked as if they had shot up into the vigour of manhood, while those who had mounted highest towards the gap, tottered onward as though they were aged men.

Before long the space between the shore and the terrace was mastered; but a moment's glance told me that all were not there who had left the boat. And I heard some of them asking others with respect to their missing companions, what had delayed the loiterers so long; and when the reply was made that they had stopped to pick up sparry pebbles and rainbow-coloured shells upon the beach, my heart ached, for I knew that the little bay in which they had landed was hemmed in with rocks which ran far into the sea, and that the tides on that coast rose very suddenly, and I feared lest, while thus at idle play, the cloud from the mountain-top might descend and shroud them in its folds, or ever they could regain the path which their companions were treading. So eager was I that I called to them repeatedly, but I fear none of them heard me, for none answered; and then a chill struck into my own heart as I thought

how many earnest calls from anxious friends I had in my own childhood disregarded or made light of, and I shuddered when by and by the sky grew darker and the waves raged horribly, and I heard amid the roaring of the wind, what I trust was only the sea-bird's cry, but which sounded like the death-shriek of a poor perishing child.

Meanwhile, the sun was for the present shining brightly, and it was a pleasant sight to see the terrace in front of me receive the little band of travellers. Most of them had, happily, followed their preceptor's instructions as to the way in which they were to walk. To believe and to obey is the instinct of guileless childhood. They were aware that he knew the track better than they could, and their habit had been to do what they were bidden ; so, though the track was very steep and difficult, they kept to it carefully, and so doing they found their footing firm, and the way though rough, a safe one : they did not grow giddy ; and here and there, there was a spot where they could pause and take breath. There were even flowers within reach, and some I marked who gathered heart's-ease there, which they bore in their bosoms so long as my eyes could follow them. A few were more

ambitious, and not content with heart's-ease must needs stretch forth their hands to reach some gayer or more conspicuous flowers. One I saw that after a violent struggle grasped what proved to be a thistle; another succeeded in gathering a bunch of the sea-iris, but directly afterwards was compelled to throw the nauseous-smelling weed away; and one there was, who reaching after a garland of wild roses overbalanced himself, and would have fallen from the cliff, but the thorns, which rent his clothes and tore his fingers, stopped his descent, and thereby saved his life.

These all had followed the path pointed out to them; but a few bold self-willed lads there were, who thought they could find a shorter and an easier way for themselves, where there were no rocks, and the cliff shelved less abruptly towards the sea. They tried it, and soon found that from the greasy nature of the clayey soil, through which land-springs were trickling in every direction, they were continually sinking knee-deep in the mire, and even when they seemed to make some little progress, for every step they advanced they slipt back two. So they were obliged to retrace their steps to the beach, whence they ascended breathless the steep

path which their companions had already surmounted, and when, after a long interval, they came out upon the terrace, their holyday garments were soiled with filth and mud.

Then, as I looked upon them, shame and bitter sorrow filled my own mind, as I thought how early I had broken my baptismal vows, and how spotted and sin-defiled was my baptismal robe ; and I made my earnest prayer to the God of my life that He would turn His face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds for His dear Son's sake.

And now the whole band (save those only who had wilfully loitered on the shore, whose subsequent fate I know not, and some who as I gathered from the conversation of their companions no longer walked among them, for the cloud had come down upon them early, and they were seen no more) had reached the terrace. The most part, especially those who came up last, were weary and exhausted, and so they threw themselves upon the soft green turf, or rested among the bowers of woodbine. But a few there were who, pausing only to take breath, at once pushed onwards. Of these some were those who had kept the right path and reached the terrace soonest ; the rest were of those who

in defiance of advice given them, had chosen ways of their own, and who now, profiting by sad experience, resolved to be self-willed no more. These all passed by me, and as I turned and looked after them I beheld them with greater or lesser speed, according to their strength, ascending the mountain side.

Yet the progress onward was not made without an effort. More than one hesitated, as some companion called him back, and urged him to rest for a while. "What need is there to hurry on so fast?" thus cried the loiterers to those who were already on their way. "We are only waiting here till we have recovered breath; if we were to go on at once the ascent would be beyond our strength."

One of the climbers looked wistfully back. Again his friend urged him to sit down, if it were but till his comrades should be rested. And the words of the tempter prevailed. The boy turned back, ran down the steep to join his friend, and so far as I know, never looked upward more.

Not so another. He was one whose dress was wet and soiled with filth, he walked lamely as though he had had a recent fall, and when he passed by me, I heard his short quick breathing,

THE CLOUD UPON THE MOUNTAIN.

and marked his exhausted, anxious look. He was one of those who had early wandered from the narrow track, and had only regained it when those with whom he started were already on the terrace. "Poor fellow," they exclaimed one to another, "what a miserable figure he looks! how worn and weary! Come here," they cried, "and let us scrape the mud and filth from off your clothes."

The boy thanked them, but declined the offer. "You will only get foul yourselves," he said in a melancholy tone, "without cleansing me. The filth is so ingrained, that the clothes are spoiled. My only hope is that others will be provided for me when I reach my home, and thither I will go at once."

"Well, but wait a moment, we are coming on by and by."

"No, no, I cannot, the longer I stand talking my lameness increases, and the wet and mud seem to hang upon me more chilly and heavily; and I am so exhausted I want to be in the mountain air, the higher I go, the more freely I breathe."

"Still it will do you no harm to refresh yourself a moment here. See how the water sparkles as it flows from yon cool spring. You

have but to stretch out your hand as you lie on this bank, and the wild strawberries are within your reach, so cooling and refreshing. Come down hither, and when we are rested we will all start together."

"No, no, I cannot come back."

"But why not?"

"I dare not, I have lost too much time already."

"What do you expect to happen to you?"

"I know not," said the boy firmly, "only this I know, that the night cometh." And without further parley, he passed onward on his way. Of his companions, some seemed staggered for a moment at his words, but the sun was still high in the heavens, and their apprehension passed away. Others pitied him as timid, and weak, and over scrupulous; and some mocked and derided him.

But little cared he for what they thought or said. He had grown wise in time, wise by sad experience. And so he resolutely kept to his purpose. Lame as he was, he soon outstripped others who were proceeding more leisurely. He rested, indeed, frequently. But his posture at such times was always on his knees, and this gave him ease and refreshment which could have

been found in no other position. So long as he and his companions knelt with their faces turned to the mountain-top, there was no risk of faintness coming on, or of their slipping backward ; but those who boasted of being able to stand upright, were sure, sooner or later, to fall ; and those who looked back upon the things behind them, instead of reaching forth unto those which were before, were sure to grow giddy and lose their heads as they looked down the precipitous steep. But this danger the youth of whom I am speaking wholly escaped ; his whole heart was set on pressing forward, and as I watched his progress, I could not but think that his earnestness and perseverance had all needful encouragement, for the higher he mounted the less he halted in his gait, the mountain air revived him, and his exertions supplied his limbs, yea, and the sunshine and the breeze in which he journeyed seemed to dry his miry garments, and to cause the black stains of mud to disappear and fade away. And so it came to pass that in spite of his early error, he was among the first who came to his journey's end. But then few had sorrowed, and few had striven like him.

And now my attention was called back to the scene in front of me, where the greater part of

the lads had flung themselves down upon the turf; for suddenly I heard sounds of music and gaiety, and along the smooth broad road which ran through the midst of the terrace, I saw a merry noisy crowd advancing, and I gathered from their discourse that they were on their way to a fair in the neighbourhood. They soon came up to the boys, who immediately recognised acquaintances among them. And the jest and laugh went round, and the boys were soon on their legs in the midst of the crowd, and I heard a pressing invitation given to them from twenty tongues at once, that they would join the revelry, and see the sights to which the gay troop was hurrying.

And some of the boys consented at once, without further delay or doubting. Others hesitated for a time, but when their new companions dwelt upon the pleasures of the fair, the smoothness of the roads, and the ease with which in consequence, both the scene of pleasure might be visited, and the mountain ascended likewise before the day closed in, the argument seemed to prevail, for these too turned their steps down the broad road. Others there were who resisted the temptation in this form, but were not proof against the wit and ridicule

of those around them. They yielded, not because they had any strong desire to go, but because they could not bear to be laughed at; they were afraid of being thought afraid. So they went; but they looked ashamed and ill at ease, and I thought I observed that the very persons who had led them astray despised them, and after a short time looked coldly on them, and avoided them.

There were two brothers; hitherto they had kept together; they had climbed the path from the shore side by side, the elder helping the younger, as was meet, guiding his steps and preventing him from falling. But now the time was come when a parting was to occur, when one was to be taken, and the other left.

It had been the wish of the youngest to have crossed the terrace without delay, and to have mounted the hill side at once in company with another boy whom he dearly loved. But in deference to the wishes of the elder, and from the diffidence natural to his years, he did not like to dispute the point, and so sate down beside him on the turf: but he felt unhappy, and the more so when the elder instead of rising, after a brief delay stretched himself out upon the grass as if about to go to sleep.

“ Oh, brother,” cried the youngest, “ are you not rested ? will you not go on ? the master told us we had no time to lose.”

“ We have a long summer’s day before us,” was the drowsy reply.

“ Yes, but the day may change, and the cloud may come down from the mountain, and the right path may be hidden from us.”

“ No fear of that,” rejoined the eldest, “ where we sit we can see its approach, and can move away in time.”

“ I do not know,” said the younger doubtfully, “ but the master particularly warned us that people do not see its approach, especially when they are near the broad road. And now I look at the sky, the clouds do seem lower than they were just now.”

“ Fancy !” was the reply.

“ But surely this is not fancy,” urged the boy, grasping eagerly at some flowers which grew near ; “ See, here is the shepherd’s calendar, its scarlet flowers are closed ; they were opened when first we reached the terrace ; and so is the pink centaury ; and here too, the starry petals of the yellow thorowax, all are shut, not one open. Surer tokens of the approach of foul weather than the closing of these flowers, there

cannot be. Do rise, dear brother, let us go hence."

But the elder was by this time too nearly asleep to heed the speaker; his eyes were closed, and in another minute or two he would have been in a deep slumber; but he was roused by the music and singing of the approaching merry-makers. He raised himself on his elbow to listen to them. Then, as they drew nearer, he started up and went forward to meet them. He was as eager now as he had been listless before.

"Oh do not join them!" cried his younger brother, seizing his arm, and trying to hold him back.

"Why not?" said the elder, shaking him off impatiently.

"Do you not see that they are all going along this broad road? Do you not remember our master's warning us, both against the road and against associating with those who travel on it?"

"Well, I am not on the road, I am only looking at it."

"Eve began with 'only looking,'" urged the younger with a sigh, still retaining his hold of his brother's arm; but the elder did not seem to hear him. And at that moment the crowd

came up to them, and he was greeted by more than one joyous good-morrow, and gaily urged to accompany them.

“Do not go, dear brother, if you love me do not go : you will break a promise, a solemn pledge and promise, if you do ; and nothing but harm and misery can come of broken promises. And you know our master told us we should find more pleasures at our journey’s end than ever we can find on our journey. Do not, do not go ;” (the elder was struggling to get free ;)
“nothing but mischief can come of it.”

“Mischief ! what folly ! I am not going among strangers am I ? Don’t you see neighbours and acquaintances in the crowd, and people we have known all our lives ? I do not mean to stay long, I shall soon be back again.”

“Oh, do not leave me,” cried the younger, wringing his hands and sobbing bitterly ; “I shall never get on without you, I shall never reach the mountain-top.”

“Of course not ; I do not mean to leave you. You will come with me.”

“Oh no, no, no. Any thing but that !” exclaimed the younger, shrinking back. “I cannot, dare not, go with you. Nothing but mischief can come of it !”

“Who are you that you should know so much better than I? Am not I the eldest? Have not I brought you safe all this way?” was the haughty rejoinder. “Don’t waste time in arguing, come along.”

“No, I cannot go down the broad road,” said the younger, sadly, but firmly.

“Well then, do you go your way,” replied the elder, “and I will go mine.” So he turned, and went away in a rage.

As for the little one, he continued steadfast: for having cast one long lingering look of anxious misery on the companion of his life, he turned his face earnestly towards the mountain, and proceeded onward, weeping as he went. His firmness, however, was not lost. It influenced others, though it failed to influence him to whom his heart was most united. Two other boys joined him, and I saw one press his hand, and speak to him thus in kind consoling tones; “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

And so I watched them journeying on side by side; not making rapid progress at first, for the younger brother still paused and halted fre-

quently, as though he was lingering in the hope of being joined once more by him whom he had lost, his companion, his guide, and his own familiar friend.

Sympathizing deeply with his distress, and conscience-stricken with the thought how nearly in many respects the conduct of the elder brother resembled my own, who had so often broken my baptismal pledge, and joined in sin and folly, the world, the devil, and the flesh, I turned my eyes once more to the broad, forbidden road. All there was stillness and solitude; the revellers had passed by; and in their noisy mirth had not observed the descent of the cloud from the mountain, which was now hanging in thick folds but a few yards above the road.

“A few yards lower,” I thought to myself, “and even should any wish to return, the mist will impede them, they will never be able to find their way back.” How great was my comfort to see dimly through the thickening vapour a few forms approaching! Yet how different, alas! was the return from the departure! Gaily and joyously they had bounded forth in the midst of a laughing crowd. Now they were creeping back, one by one, feebly and faintly. I looked at them as they emerged into strong daylight,

and saw the wanness of disease upon one countenance, remorse and shame upon another, disappointment and misery upon a third. The scenes they had visited had dazzled them for a moment, and then had sickened, wearied, and disgusted them. They had been imposed upon and cheated; they had found their so called friends hollow and selfish; their food had poisoned them; they had got entangled in brawls and strifes; they had known neither ease nor peace. All had turned out a delusion, and a mockery, and a snare. They had gained nothing; and it were well if they had not lost all. On some the cloud had actually fallen, and they had only time to cry out, "too late, too late!" before darkness overwhelmed them. Others hurried back as fast as they could; but they were but the tithe of those who had originally joined the revellers.

Earnestly, anxiously did I scrutinize each pale face which passed me, in hopes that I should recognise the elder brother, him who had promised that he would "soon be back." But I saw him not, and was just turning away in despair, for the cloud had all but reached the earth, when through the thickening gloom, I saw one fleeing as for his life, and anon he came

forth naked and wounded. It was he for whom I had watched. He had plunged into the wildest scenes of revelry, and while maddened with intoxication, had fallen among thieves who had intreated him shamefully, and robbed him.

His misery had sobered him; his brother's warnings had come into his mind; and he had rushed back with the energy of despair. Never shall I forget how he grappled with difficulties, how he struggled to get forward to the narrow path, how soon he was seen scrambling among the rocks, how loudly he called to his brother; and never, never shall I forget the unutterable joy that gleamed upon his countenance, when first his eyes rested on his brother's distant form! Again and again he repeated that well-known name, and ere long he was heard. "Come to me, come to me," he exclaimed, "I am foot-sore and wounded, my strength is failing, my eyes are dim, my head is dizzy. Come back to me and help me." The younger brother stopped, stretched forth his hands with the utmost joy and affection towards him, and beckoned him onwards. Then he sank on his knees.

"Oh cruel! cruel!" ejaculated the elder, with an exceeding sharp and bitter cry: "he sees me ready to perish here, and yet he will

not help me. I am utterly exhausted, I have nothing for it but lie down in despair and die!" But something within must have reminded him that to despair, would in his case, be the greatest of all sins, seeing that he had already had a great deliverance. Then he reflected and understood why it was that his brother could not come down to him. And he felt that in some mysterious way his brother was helping him, though he only continued on his knees. It was an encouragement, at any rate, to feel that the distance between them was not increasing. So he made a fresh effort to reach his brother; but he was too weak. Then it occurred to him to do what his brother was doing. He lifted his eyes upwards, and fell upon his knees likewise. Long he continued in that position, and still as he kneeled his faintness and weariness grew less. The cold mountain air stanchd the bleeding of his wound. And when he arose, he found that his feet and ankle bones had received strength. He was yet too far off to hear the sound of his brother's voice, or to hold converse with him; but the beckonings and gestures of affectionate encouragement were still continued, and I saw a small packet bounding towards him, thrown from the young one's hand, which I made no doubt contained

food to strengthen him, and words of kindness. It fell directly in his path, and once more as he laid hold on it, he flung himself on his knees and again received strength. Thus he went on, faint but pursuing; and, every step which he took upwards, the distance between the brothers was lessened, till at length they were locked in each other's arms, and thenceforward they never parted more; yea, they seemed to love one another with a tenfold love on account of the misery which had ensued through their temporary separation, the elder exhibiting the tenderest gratitude, and the younger still helping and supporting him, for I could not but remark that he still walked lamely; I knew he must carry his scars with him to his grave, for his wounds were very deep.

And then I meditated sadly on my own condition, how sins, the commission of which I had long and long ago forgotten, still left their guilt upon me. I saw how thoughtlessly in spite of many warnings, how ungratefully in spite of many mercies, I had wandered into the broad road that leadeth to destruction. And as I marked the cloud which now seemed to cut off wholly the return of those who had thought that they could retrace their steps when they

pleased, the obvious reflection rose to my lips, "So will it prove with me, if I strive to serve two masters, or fail to keep a presumptuous spirit in subjection, or reckon on a certain future. Death will come upon me in an hour when I think not, and leave me without an opportunity for repentance or returning!"

And now the lengthening shadows reminded me that the day was far spent, and I felt that I must take my last look at the little band who were mounting the narrow path. They had, I hoped, escaped their greatest peril, and I could not doubt that they were in earnest, seeing that they had surmounted many difficulties already. Yet from the crag on which I stood I saw that they were still beset with perils, and so the lesson was urged on my own mind of my urgent need of unceasing watchfulness and continual prayer, that so by grace I might be kept steadfast in faith, and diligent in obedience.

At the foot of the steepest portion of the ascent there was a level spot, covered with green moss, and the gay flowers that grow in marshy places. There were firm tussocks of rushes at intervals, and those who were cautious stepped lightly from one to another of these, and passed on safely; but more than one grew confident,

and walked heedlessly, or from levity sought amusement in trying to leap from one point of firm footing to the next, and so missed their footing, and got plunged up to the neck in a treacherous bog. Further on, there were clefts, and chasms, and fissures in the soil, not easily discernible, for the glossy foliage of the hart's tongue, or the spleenwort, usually obscured the narrowest, while over the widest and deepest was spread a tangled mass of the creeping plants of the district, bind-weed, and the everlasting pea with its showy clusters of pink and blue, the wild rose, the night-shade with its clinging stems and scarlet fruit, the bryony, the ivy, and the hop. He who walked among these needed to walk with the utmost caution, for a grievous sprain would be produced from the heedless foot slipping even into a shallow fissure; while there were chasms so deep and dangerous that he who fell into them, even if he escaped without broken bones, would be sorely delayed and hindered on his journey.

Further perils yet! Beyond the swamp, and past the tract so rent with cracks and clefts, was a spot bare and barren, covered with flakes and fragments which the heat of summer or the frosts in winter had splintered off the rocks above.

Here the distinctness of the upward road was not lost, indeed, but it was confused in consequence of the frequency of diverging paths. The further such paths led off from the main road the fainter they grew; they came to nothing, or went suddenly downward to sloughs or precipices. Some lost themselves here; and though a few found their way back I know not that the rest did, nor what became of them, for when I saw them last a mist seemed covering them. Yet I saw enough to satisfy me that they need not have lost themselves. If they were bewildered and benighted at last, it was only through their own wilfulness. The track which had been trodden for ages was not indistinguishable by those who looked for it; there were sure marks by which to know it; and there was a long train in advance, who in their progress upwards still bore witness that it was the right road, the road that had been pointed out from the first.

And now I could not but contrast the numbers of those whom I had first seen assembled on the beach, with the little band which was at length reaching the mountain-top. Many were altogether missing; many were lingering far behind; some seemed utterly careless, and

to have no wish to advance ; while some were lying bruised or lamed by the way-side.

Sad sights these ! but there was one so joyous and consolatory that it compensated for all the rest. It was to watch that happy company who now were finishing their course, and reaching their destination, to see how affectionately they helped each other onward, to hear them high above me carolling like the lark, for distant as they were I did hear them, and the sound brought back to my mind the words of the sweet singer of old, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage," and taught me that great as their perils had been they must have had all along a source of strength and peace within, which the world can neither give nor take away.

Nor was this all : for of those young travellers who, in an honest and a good heart, had set forth on their journey, resolved to gain the summit of the mountain, who had adhered to their instructions, and availed themselves of the helps which had been given them, not one, no, not the youngest, and weakest, and feeblest of all, missed of success. One after another they reached the highest pass, and though, when they had reached it, the cloud covered them, and I

saw them no more ; yet, in my last view of them, the bright and glorious rays of the setting sun were resting on their heads, and I knew that their toils and labours were ended, and that all henceforward would be the brightness and the joy of home.

Long, long, I stood gazing at them, wishing that my own lot might be like theirs. But at length I perceived that a cold damp haze was floating round me ; an icy breath was chilling me. I started, and saw that the sky was overcast, that the heavens were black with a coming storm, and that the cloud was rolling down the sides of the mountain towards me, though the steep and narrow path was still open.

I hastened to leave my resting place, and as I gathered my garments round me, the sound of the thrilling voice entered my ears once more ; “ Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain ; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.”

TONY DILKE.

MANY years have elapsed since I passed a few weeks in autumn at St. Bride's. It is now a place of fashionable resort. It was then an obscure fishing village, with two or three lodging-houses, let in the summer months to persons, who, like myself, required rest and change of air. It was a wild spot, little known or frequented, and by no means easy of access. Its site was a narrow cove, or bowl-shaped gap which shelved down to the sea. On either side were lofty cliffs, and above and behind there were downs which stretched away for miles and miles without a tree or a human dwelling. And the people were, for the most part, as wild as the place. I have called it a fishing village, but in former days it had been a notorious haunt for smugglers; and even at the time when I visited it, it was believed that the inhabitants made more by their

contraband trade than by their fishing. At a still earlier period, forty or fifty years ago, there was no such effective coast-guard as now almost wholly prevents smuggling. No wonder St. Bride's was a low-lived place! And at that time too, the beautiful lighthouse had not been built, which now serves as a beacon to all vessels entering the channel, and gives them timely warning to keep off the rocky coast, and that most perilous part of it, Duncliffe Bay, where, when south-westerly gales were blowing, more than a score of vessels have been wrecked in one night.

The terrible scenes however which occurred at such times, seem to have had the effect of hardening rather than of softening the hearts of the inhabitants of this part of the coast; a wreck was to them not a sight of pity but of joy. Their thought was not of assistance but of plunder. And so it came to pass that there were dark (and it is to be feared, but too true) tales of men, who had raised false beacon-lights upon Duncliffe Head for the purpose of misleading home-bound ships, and who, when in consequence a shipwreck had occurred, had not scrupled to meet and hurl backwards into the boiling surge, such few mariners as, half-perished with cold and wet,

had escaped from the sinking vessel, and were ascending the cliffs, thus preventing the appearance of any living owner to lay claim to the stranded goods. I should gladly avoid allusion to such horrors, but the mention of them is necessary for the comprehension of the ensuing pages.

My residence at St. Bride's occurred when I was a young man, for I had only been admitted to Holy Orders about a year before. While there, the clergyman of the parish was called away from home, and at his request I undertook to officiate for him in his church, and to attend to any of his parishioners who might require my services and spiritual assistance. But of course I could only go among them as an entire stranger, for I knew no one in the place except the clergyman and my landlady.

It was on the evening of All Saints' Day that returning to my lodging after a long walk, I stood for a while on the summit of the cliff which overhangs the village, to gaze upon the scene before me. The sun had set some time, and the moon was already high in the heavens, but a heavy cloud concealed her orb from my sight, though it by no means intercepted her rays from falling on the sea. Accordingly,

along the surface of the grey water ran a wide track of pale yellow light, faint towards the shore, and now and then quite interrupted by black rocks, or long spits of sand, which spread out to a great distance, at low water ; but brighter and brighter as it receded from the land, till at its brightest point, the glittering pathway was suddenly and completely obscured by a veil of grey mist. In the very line of light three or four fishing-boats were moving, and so beautiful was the scene that I watched them from the time when they were threading their way among the rocks, till they had entered within the line of mist, and then were seen no more. How striking an illustration is this, I thought to myself, both of human life, and of that most comfortable doctrine which the Church sets before us in her services for this day, that, namely, of the communion of saints. Like the occupants of those little boats, the children of God have to take their voyage across a sea often vexed with storms, and always abounding with rocks and shoals : like them, we may find a path of light, which will shine more and more the further we advance along it ; like them we must, after a while, enter a region where we shall be hidden from the view of those

whom we leave behind ; yet the separation will be rather apparent than real ; we shall still be brethren, still live, and love one another, still be subjects of one kingdom, still be united by common hopes and desires, still look for re-union and rest together when our voyage is ended.

I was here interrupted in my train of thought by observing the approach of a person whose manner at once shewed me that I was the object of his search. He was a decent-looking young man whom I had observed to be very regular in his attendance at church, but this was all I knew of him.

“ I beg your pardon, Sir,” he said, “ but I believe you are the gentleman that has undertaken our parson’s duty while he is away.”

I intimated that I was, and asked how I could be of service to him.

“ It is not on my own account that I have made bold to trouble you, Sir : but I thought, perhaps, you would not be above visiting a neighbour of mine, who, I think, is not long for this world.”

“ Certainly not ; I will come with you at once. Does he live hard at hand ?”

“ No great way off, but further, I fear, Sir, than you may care to go at the end of a long

walk. Do you know the cottages at Duncliffe Chine?"

"Oh yes," I answered, "and now the tide is down, we can keep to the beach, and shall soon be there. Will you shew me the house?"

"That I will, and gladly," replied Harry Davis, "for the poor creature that's departing is in sore need of all that you can do for him."

"Who and what is he? Has he been long ill? What is his character?" were questions which I asked in a breath, for I saw by my companion's manner that there was something peculiar about the case.

"Did you never hear of old Tony Dilke, Sir? 'Claribel' Dilke as some people called him, but I reckon that no man dared call him so to his face, at least so long as he could hear it."

"No, I am quite a stranger among you."

"I suppose, Sir, you have heard tell of the wreck of the Claribel off Duncliffe Head. That's a tale which has been known far and wide. It happened when I was quite a child, but I can remember, as though it were yesterday, seeing the dead bodies left by the tide, and how the poor creatures were buried where they were found. You'll mind the row of graves

above the beach, half-way betwixt here and the Chine ; we call the place Deadmen's Dell."

" I have understood that a foreign galliot was wrecked there, and that it was supposed that some of the crew had had foul play among the wreckers, but I know no particulars. How came she to be wrecked?"

" She didn't know where she was ; she was misled by a light on Dunccliffe Head, and got knocked to pieces on the Mill-race."

" Some accidental fire, I suppose?"

" No, Sir," replied Davis in an under tone, and hesitating as though he would not bring the words out ; " It was not accident : it was kindled by Dilke, and some of his gang, for the very purpose of luring the vessel on to the rocks. It was an old trick of theirs, and the Claribel was neither the first nor the last ship that they brought into peril ; but she was the only one where all hands were lost, and where almost all the cargo disappeared too?"

" Do you mean to tell me," I exclaimed in dismay, " that the man to whose death-bed you have summoned me, has not only been a robber, but in effect a murderer, as much a murderer as if he had slain the ship-wrecked crew with his own hands?"

“Dilke has had hard measure if he is innocent of the heaviest part of the charge,” was the reply, “for many people believe that his hands were actually stained with blood. But he has enough to answer for without that. If he kindled the light that caused the wreck, he was at any rate, as you say, Sir, a murderer in intention. But bad as he was, there were worse than him, at least more brutal and cruel; there was one that went by the name of Black Bob; and another, I remember, whom we called Pegge the Pig-killer, that was almost directly afterwards killed like a pig himself, in a fight with some of the revenue folk; that man scrupled at nothing. And I believe it was he, and not Dilke, that did deeds of blood that night. There was a woman’s body found on the shore next day, and a young lad’s, which had wounds on them, which could hardly have been made by the rocks. And it was known that Pegge carried a butcher’s cleaver in his hand that night.”

“But why was he not arrested, and put upon his trial?”

“I believe he was arrested, but the justices could bring nothing home to him. Indeed there was no one to be found who would give evidence against him, or Dilke, or any of the gang. Ours

was a low-life place in those days ; it's bad enough now ; and if any one was suspected of being disposed to bear witness against a neighbour, he was like enough to be found at the bottom of our cliffs with his neck broke."

" Then the magistrates dismissed the case ?"

" Yes, Sir : I have understood that there was a great talk about it at the time. But I suppose it was like a nine days' wonder, soon forgotten, except just hereabouts ; or may be it was hushed up ; smugglers and wreckers were apt to have powerful friends in those days. At any rate it was hard to find a jury to convict them."

" And what became of Tony Dilke ?"

" O, he came back to his old quarters, and lived unmolested. He built a house, (not the hovel he now occupies, he only took to that after his troubles,) and he bought a new boat, and he dressed better than before, and had money for every thing he wanted ; but for all that he seemed like one who felt something heavy at his heart. He kept more to himself, saw less of his old companions, was less keen about going to sea, and moped about the house, or along the shore. He never looked one full in the face, and he turned away from those who looked at him. I have known him, Sir, ever since I was a child,

for my mother and he were next door neighbours, but he was so stern and sad, and looked so askance at me, that I was always afraid of him."

"What has been his history of late years?"

"Why, Sir, it has been as if he were constantly under God's curse. Misfortune after misfortune has come upon him as thick as hail. My wife has often said that he puts her in mind of the wicked uncle in 'the babes of the wood.' First, three of his children, as fine lads as ever you saw, were killed all in a moment. Parts of our cliffs are very dangerous to walk under; in wet and frosty weather they are always crumbling away; and sometimes vast masses fall. While these boys were heedlessly playing beneath, an overhanging portion, many tons' weight, flaked off and crushed them to pieces. That broke the mother's heart, (she was pale and drooping before,) and sent her to her grave. Then the man himself grew poorer and poorer; no heavy losses, but nothing seemed to prosper with him. So he sold his house, or at least his creditors did, and then he took up his abode at the foot of the Chine: and a miserable place it is, Sir, as you'll see."

"Do any of his family live with him?"

“ He has no children left. There was one daughter, but she died of decline, and his only surviving son was lost one foggy night, boat and all, upon the Mill-race yonder. The old man has never had any one to live with him since. He is a lone man ; but, lonesome as he is, I do not think he would have put up with a relative in his house, even if he had any, and I know of none.”

“ I suppose by what you have stated,” said I, “ that he must be advanced in years ; has he been able to manage for himself ? ”

“ Yes, Sir, he must be a good way past seventy : but he has been a deal broken of late, and so my wife, who has been used to wash for him and clean his house, has lately prepared his meals. It was when she went into his room to get his dinner to-day, that she found him sitting shivering over the fire, and she saw in a moment that he was struck for death. He gazed at her as if he didn't know her, and kept muttering some nonsense or other till she was quite frightened. Then she came and called me, and we got him to bed and sent for the doctor : but the poor creature does nothing but rave, and seems in such an awful state, that I thought it but right to fetch you.”

“Has your own clergyman, Mr. Shaw, never been in the habit of visiting him?”

“He has often endeavoured to do so, but the old man would never listen to him; indeed I fear has often spoken rudely to him. But you need not fear him; he’s past that now, Sir; he’s very weak; but my wife thinks he’ll come to himself by and by; and when he feels, as he must, that he is near his end, he surely cannot but be glad to listen to you. The worst is that he is almost stone-deaf.”

“Stone-deaf!” This was the finishing stroke. Every fresh circumstance I had heard during our lengthened conversation, had filled me with deeper and deeper dismay at the prospect of the task before me, but this last piece of intelligence was utterly overwhelming. It is awful enough for a minister to have to attend the dying bed of a parishioner who has been known to him for years past; but this man was an utter stranger, that stranger was believed to have been guilty of the most fearful crimes, his end was fast approaching, his mind was wandering, and he was almost stone-deaf! I felt utterly stunned by such a responsibility as that of ministering to such an one in his last hours. But to withdraw from it would be to incur

guilt almost as great as his own. I made my silent prayer for strength, and guidance, and light.

Up to this time our path had lain along the firm white sands of the sea-shore, but now our further progress along the beach was interrupted by a barrier of rocks and large stones which extended to a considerable distance. We therefore mounted a narrow path which wound along the face of the cliff, upwards or downwards, according as the ledges of rock afforded a firm footing ; and so we passed on till we came out upon a piece of broken ground on which had been erected four or five miserable hovels, the haunt, as one should expect, of ague and low fever. It was as dreary a spot as can be imagined ; the soil, a cold blue clay on which nothing would grow but reed and rag-wort, with here and there a patch of mare's-tail, or the large untidy leaves of the colt's-foot. In front rose in stern and dismal majesty the bold abrupt Dunccliffe Head, frowning over the deep, and effectually excluding for many months in the year, the rays of sunshine from ever falling on the cottages, after an early hour in the afternoon. This headland stood out, an enormous mass of dark, dull red-brown colouring, separated from us by a deep

narrow chasm, through which a tiny rivulet wound its way into the sea ; this was the Chine, which gave its name to the locality. To our right hand was the restless ocean ; on the left at some little distance was a wall of cliff, surmounted with a fringe of stunted trees, and perforated in many places with caves, which had been the haunt of the smugglers before the cottages were built. The plot of ground on which these edifices stood was in keeping with the rest of the scene ; it suggested no thoughts to the mind but those of dreariness and slovenliness. The cottages themselves were but mere huts, built of boulders, thatched with reeds, one story high, with low doors, and small windows. The approach lay through dung-heaps and pigsties ; a few rows of cabbages, here and there, were the only attempts at garden ; and the only marks by which one man's premises were divided from his neighbour's consisted in low broken walls of turf. Half a dozen pollard willows, from the boughs of which hung a tangled mass of nets, ropes, and cork floats, a few crab pots, and some strips of more than half putrid skate, or dog-fish, (used by the fishermen for their baits,) suspended from the forks of a dead apple-tree, completed the foreground of the dreary picture.

Through these we wound our way, mounted a dozen rude steps, and stood before a hovel (the smallest and worst of all) built, as it seemed, almost into the cliff. The light of a dimly-burning fire glimmered through the lattice. The door was open, and we entered. A woman, my companion's wife, met us, and led us at once from the outer to the inner room.

"Thank God, you're come at last, Harry," she whispered to her husband, and then curtseying, addressed me.

"It is very good of you, Sir, to come at this time of night, but poor creature, he never can hold out till morning."

"Is he worse? has the doctor seen him?" asked Harry Davis.

"Yes, Mr. Wilson was in a while since, and says nothing can be done for him, he's fairly worn out."

"Is he sensible?" I inquired.

"You'll judge for yourself, Sir," was the reply, and so we entered the chamber of death.

A rushlight, standing upon a sea-chest, threw its flickering light on the objects in the room.

There were two or three men, and as many women gathered together at the further end. They moved as we came in, and the light fell

upon a low, uncurtained bed. In it lay a tall, gaunt, hard-featured man, dying. I saw at a glance, that in health and vigour the strength of that well-built frame must have been prodigious, and his breadth of chest, as it rose and fell with his laboured breathing, at once arrested my eye; but his strength was evidently gone; the size of his bones seemed only to exhibit his emaciation more strongly; his eyes were sunk, the nose sharply pinched, his cheeks hollow and lead-like in colour, and there was already the earthy smell of death in the room. He was very restless, sometimes snorting, sometimes muttering, sometimes talking loudly, but incoherently; and he moved his head from side to side, and threw his arms out, and drew them back again continually. It was the stage of excitement which goes before the last exhaustion.

“Peace be to this house,” said I, “and to all that dwell in it!”

But alas, he who dwelt therein was no son of peace that he could say “Amen” to my prayer. The patient heeded me not.

I took the candle and went to his bed-side, in hopes that I should thus attract his attention. “How fares it with you, my friend?” I inquired, speaking slowly and distinctly, as remem-

bering his infirmity. I might as well have spoken to a stone.

“Do you try,” said I, turning to one of the women, “he will know your voice, better than that of a stranger.”

She repeated my words to him, but the result was equally unsuccessful.

The men, wild-looking fellows they were, had shewn me all respect by taking off their hats when I entered, and I thought gazed with the utmost anxiety on the unhappy man, eager to benefit him if they could. I nodded to one of them, who now approached the bedside, by way of intimating my wish that he would endeavour to make the patient comprehend that a minister of religion was near him.

“Tony,” said the man, “here’s the parson come to pray with you; try if you can’t listen to him. You’re in a very bad way; perhaps it would do you good.”

One word, and one word only seemed to reach the sick man’s ears. He thrust out his hand as if to push something aside. “Parson!” he exclaimed, “who’s talking about parsons? We don’t want any parsons here. What’s the use of them? I don’t like such black cattle!”

“Hush, hush, Tony,” cried Harry Davis, “don’t you know you are very ill?”

“ Very ill, am I, and what then? The parson can’t make me better; don’t you know the rhyme,

‘ The devil was sick, and the devil a monk would be :
The devil got well, and the devil a monk was he !’

But I’m not sick. I’m quite well. Come along, Pegge, and get the boat out; there’ll be work for you, and Black Bob, and all of us, before morning! Look out! Look out! It’s all right, she’ll be upon the race in five minutes. We’ve done them nicely. Hark. Crash! there she goes! what a yell they make, and be hanged to them! never mind the fire now. It has burned long enough. The darker now the better; get down upon the beach. She’ll be breaking up directly. Ha, ha! d’ye hear what Pegge says? Look at his cleaver: it’s bright enough now, it will be dull by and by. ‘ As fast as ever they get on shore,’ says he, ‘ I’ll knock ’em back again. Fight will they? Ha! ha! ha! well; we’ll fight too! and kill, kill, kill. Dead men tell no tales. Why, what a chicken-hearted fool you are! ‘ Give me the cleaver,’ says Pegge. Eh! how the blood runs! Yes, yes, the sea will soon wash out all that. Ugly gashes? Yes, the rocks make ugly gashes. Roll that woman on one side, and the boy. How they stare at me! take ’em away, I tell you; how can I mind all these things that are drifting in, while they keep looking at me?

Murder them? I dare you to prove it. I didn't murder them. Who saw me near them? Hark! what's that? See, see, the cliff is falling. Never mind, it will hide them; the woman and the boy with his long yellow hair. No, no, it isn't yellow hair! it's black! it's my own Willie, and Dick, and little Tony! They're crushed all to pieces. Dig 'em out, dig 'em out. O what a mash! Come away? No, I won't, I tell you I won't, won't!"

And the wretched man buried his face in his hands; remained silent for a minute or two, and then recommenced the low unintelligible muttering which had attracted my notice on my entering the room, as being a very unfavourable symptom.

I waited for a while, and again attempted to recal his attention. But he was either too deaf to hear me, or my words failed to enter into his wandering mind. He once or twice turned his face towards me, and I almost hoped that I should be able to attract his notice; but it was a delusive hope; almost before I could address myself to him, he was again rambling incoherently. So after remaining an hour or more by the bed-side, and finding my efforts useless, I addressed myself to the bystanders.

“What an awful lesson is this, my friends, to us all! What a warning to prepare, while life and health remain to us, and our senses are undisturbed by disease, for that hour which may come at any time, and must come at last! If our Blessed Saviour, in whom was no sin, felt himself constrained to say, ‘I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work,’ how needful is it that we should finish what we have to do,—to make our peace with God, before our allotted day of grace is over! Not one of us has any superfluous time, no years nor days to spare. And so sure as God sees us wasting our time, or putting off attending to the work of our salvation to what we suppose will be a more convenient season, may we expect that He will deny us that convenient season on which we reckon. We tempt Him to cut us off in a moment, or leave us, like our poor brother here, delirious or senseless on our dying beds. I believe, too, that the experience of all those whose office it has been to attend the dying, goes to shew, that men for the most part die as they have lived. It is very, very rare to find a man who has forgotten God all his life, remember Him on his death-bed. And he who deliberately puts God out of his thoughts, or,

which is the same thing, puts the thought of Him away as much as he can, is almost sure to be taken unawares at last. According to His own warning, it is precisely in such an hour as he thinks not that his Lord cometh to call him to account. I fear, from all I have heard of your unhappy neighbour, that he has been a very hardened and determined sinner. But it is not our business to judge him. What concerns us is that we look to ourselves, and take heed that we do not delay our own repentance till our day of grace be past. There is only one thing which we can now do for him, and I am sure you will all do that willingly. Let us pray God to have mercy on him, to restore his senses, and awaken him to a true sense of his condition, so that if it be possible, even now, at the eleventh hour, he may turn with his whole heart to his offended Maker. Let us beseech God not to take him out of this world till he is fitted for his awful change, so that when he goes forth to meet the Bridegroom, he may not find the door for ever shut against him !”

Then we all knelt down, and when we had joined in earnest prayer, I left the house with a heavy heart, promising to return early the following morning.

I did so ; but if the scene had been sad the night before, it was sadder still then. There was no more of wild incoherent talking, or restless tossing of the limbs. All was still enough ; but it was the stillness of exhaustion. Life was ebbing fast away, and the dying man was apparently in a state of stupor ; every avenue of sense seemed closed, and he was as much dead to the world around him, as if the heavy soil were already heaped up six feet above him, and the grass were growing on his grave. It was only by a fluttering pulse, and a slight rattling in his breathing, that the presence of life was discernible, for his eyes were closed, the jaw was drooping, and the extremities were cold and clammy. He had raved and tossed himself about, the poor women who were watching over him told me, till his strength was spent, and had been lying like a log ever since. He had never shewn the slightest symptom of returning intelligence.

“ We have prayed for him as well as we could, Sir,” said one of them, “ and Harry Davis, who is a better scholar than we are, read prayers out of the book you left behind ; but he took no notice.”

“ You have done all you could, all that any one can do. He must be left to God’s disposal.

He must bear his own burden. Only, while there is life, there is hope, for there is nothing impossible with God. And therefore, while we see life in him, we must continue to intercede for him, remembering what St. James tells us of the efficacy of effectual fervent prayer."

So we knelt down and prayed again, and repeated our intercessions at intervals during the day ; but he in whose behalf we prayed remained as senseless as the bed upon which he was lying. Then, towards noon, I turned my steps once more homewards ; desiring that I might be sent for immediately, if any change should take place, but well satisfied from what I saw of the patient's state, that only one change yet remained for him, though the event might be delayed for a few hours longer.

Having received no fresh intelligence at a late hour in the afternoon, I again proceeded along the beach towards Duncliffe Chine. It was a wild November evening, and threatened to be a stormy night. Towards the horizon the sea was almost black ; above that sharp and well-defined line, the sky was of a dull lurid crimson for some brief space, and then came banks of heavy clouds, piled one above another, dark (yet not so dark as the sea) at their base, and gradually passing

into lighter shades above my head. There was a cold silvery flicker on the surface of the water, which was already a good deal agitated with the rising wind, and I observed that the sea was no longer clear and transparent, but thick and turbid, as though the depths were already stirred. And so observing, my thoughts naturally passed from the troubled element to the unhappy man whose career had been so rough and dark, and whose end threatened to be so awful; and the words of the prophet came like a warning voice into my ears; "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

And now the increasing power of the wind, with frequent scuds of heavy rain, and the noise and spray of the rising tide, dashing among the rocks, made me hurry forward, and I was soon at the cottage; but no light gleamed through the window, and the door was shut. I lifted the latch, and entered the dwelling, but no one came forward to meet me, so I passed on to the inner room, the door to which was also closed, but the rays of a candle shone through the joints of the ill-closed wood-work.

I knocked, but no one answered. Then I

opened the door. No living soul was there. A rushlight was burning on the sea-chest. And upon the bed lay a clean white sheet. And there was the outline of a corpse beneath it.

My approach to the cottage had not been observed in the twilight by any of the occupants of the neighbouring dwellings, who, wearied with watching, had returned home for a while, after having completed the needful arrangements for the departed; and, owing to the accidental circumstance of his making a call on the way, I had missed meeting Harry Davis, who had gone to St. Bride's to inform me that an hour or so before, Tony Dilke had passed to his account. He had never rallied, never spoken, never stirred after I left him. By degrees the breathing became slower, till there was a longer and a longer interval between each faint gasp. The bystanders held their own breath, and listened nervously, for the end was now close at hand. Then came another gasp, longer, fuller, deeper. Was all over? No: it was heard once more. Again they listened, waited for its repetition. But this time in vain. Henceforth, and for ever, all was still. He was dead! Dead: gone to meet his God!

And of the result of that meeting none shall

know till we all stand before the judgment-seat. Yet he, ere the echo of that last gasp had died away, had doubtless felt a foretaste of his future doom, and understood what was comprehended in the threat which he had so often despised, that that doom should be eternal.

Thus died Dilke the Wrecker. But what have any of us to do, the reader will ask, with such a case as his? Hardly any of us would ever have the opportunity of committing such a crime as his, and of those who had the opportunity, scarcely one would ever feel the temptation to commit it. In these days, it is surely unnecessary to warn Christians against such a horrible offence. I trust it is so. But there is an offence of even deeper dye than his, of which people make very little account, and which, it is to be feared, is very common.

His murderous act consisted in kindling a light on the cliffs, with the deliberate intention of thereby misleading unfortunate mariners, and luring them to a course which would bring their vessel, and most probably themselves, to destruction. It was a deed of atrocious wickedness. But it was only the bodies of men which his evil designs could reach. Are there none who use a like process for the destruction of their brethren's souls?

If any man deliberately calls evil good, and good evil, let him know assuredly that his sin is near akin to that of Dilke the Wrecker. If any man tries to corrupt the innocence of the young and inexperienced, by making a mock at sin, thereby luring them on to become the devil's prey, is not he the worse murderer of the two?

If any man attempts by the force of mockery or ridicule to undermine the Christian principles of others, thereby imperilling their souls, wherein is he more excusable than the ignorant and brutal wrecker?

If any man, in order that he may not be alone in his wickedness, endeavours to weaken the conscientious scruples of others who are afraid to offend God, what is this but trying to destroy their souls? what is he but a wrecker and a murderer?

If any man for the gratification of his own fleshly lusts and passions, tries to lead the pure and modest, aye, or even the impure and immodest, into the commission of sins of uncleanness, is not he doing all that is in his power to ruin a soul for which Christ died? And if he succeeds, will not his victim's blood be on his head?

If any man in the boldness of professed, or in the recklessness of practical unbelief, makes it his object, directly or indirectly, to unsettle the religious faith of others, is not he doing a devil's work? Is not he, like the wrecker, seeking to accomplish a work of cruel destruction?

And to sum up all in a few words, if any man knowingly misleads, or perverts the judgment of others, in order that he may thereby make them as bad as himself, is he not to all intents and purposes the murderer of their souls? Has he not cause to feel that the voice of his brother's blood will cry out against him?

Perhaps some of us have never seen the matter in this light before. If we have not, it behoves us to think seriously about it now. By and by it may be too late. It may please God that the disease, which is destined to remove us hereafter from this world, may leave us on our dying beds delirious, or senseless. But God forbid that we should be haunted with such visions as those which thronged around the dying wrecker! God forbid that we should pass from this world to the next with the guilt of having effected the eternal ruin of a brother's soul upon our own!

THE DAY THAT NEVER CAME.

Elmhurst Vicarage, February 25th, 1832.—I had an early visit this morning from the good old housekeeper at the Hall. “I am anxious to speak to you, Sir,” she said, “about Alick, the under butler.” “I am very glad of it,” I replied, “I was anxious to hear of him from some of his fellow-servants. He is probably more open with them than he will be with me. He is so unwilling to enter into conversation with me, that although he cannot avoid me now, as he did before he was confined to his arm-chair, I find I can make no progress with him whatever. It seems as though he had resolutely hardened his heart against receiving God’s message through God’s minister. And therefore, perhaps, the only chance of reaching his conscience, is through the means of those who, like yourself, have the awful warning of his example constantly before you, who have almost hourly intercourse with him, and who have opportunities of saying things to him, which even now, at this, which seems to us

like "the eleventh hour" of his unhappy life, may, by God's great mercy, awaken him to a sense of his danger. It would be a grievous sin, either from fear or false shame, to neglect such an opportunity; but, as respects yourself, I am quite sure that instead of shrinking from so unpleasant, and, it may be, so thankless a task, you would rather make than miss an occasion of being of use to him."

"That would I indeed," replied my visitor with hearty earnestness, "and I think there is more of an opening than there has been hitherto. He is much worse, and feels himself to be so. The water has risen very much in his body; his head and breast are greatly swollen, and Mr. Graves who saw him yesterday, told me that he did not think he could last many days."

"May God have mercy on him, then," I exclaimed. "Is he aware of his situation?"

"Not of the extent of his danger, Sir; but he has long known that his symptoms are dropsical, and he certainly thinks ill of himself now."

"That is the reason, is it," I asked, "why you have more hope than you had of his beginning to think of the things which belong unto his peace, before they are for ever hidden from his eyes?"

“Yes, Sir, and he said more to me yesterday, when I was talking with him, than he ever did before. To be sure it was little enough, but it was better than nothing, for it shewed that, at any rate, he was thinking serious thoughts. He had been in a good deal of pain, and was saying that he thought he grew worse instead of better. I answered that I feared he did, and that there seemed so little likelihood of amendment from the usual course of such diseases as his, that there would be but little to make him wish to linger on in this world, beyond the desire, which I hoped he had, to prepare himself for the next. Well, Sir, he turned his head away impatiently, and took no notice at first, but by and by, when I was beginning to think of something else, he gave a kind of a groan that quite made me start, and fixing his eyes upon me, with, O, such a dismal look! he said, almost in a whisper, ‘I’ll tell you what it is, Mrs. Miles. This is a very ugly world. I don’t care to live in it, and yet I’m afraid to die out of it.’”

“Well, Mrs. Miles,” I replied, “this was, as you truly say, not much to give us encouragement with respect to him; but it is clear that your remark touched him closely: the sting was left in the wound. Did he say no more?”

“Nothing, Sir. And I thought it best to leave him for awhile with his own thoughts. Later in the day I took him that book you gave me, *The pious Christian’s Daily Preparations for Death and Eternity*; but when he had just looked at the title, he laid it down again. Would he not use it? I asked: and he answered, ‘By and by.’ But, Sir, we all know too well what ‘by and by’ means from his lips.”

“Yes, indeed,” I answered, “for years past his miserable downward course has been the result of his irresolution to face his known duties, and of his cowardly shrinking and putting off till to-morrow what he was fully conscious that he ought to do at once. You wish me to come down to the hall and see him? I fear he has expressed no such wish on his own part.”

“No, he has not,” said Mrs. Miles sadly, “but it is such a dreadful thing to see a fellow creature passing out of the world, and so unfitted for a change, as Alick is, that I thought it best to let you know what has occurred.”

“I am much obliged to you, and will return with you to the hall at once. You have acted like a good Christian in all you have done for him for many weeks past, and I trust you will continue your good offices. You may be of in-

calculable service, for if he continues to be as unwilling to benefit by my ministrations as he has been hitherto, you may have opportunities and power to say things with effect, which would make no impression if they came from me. At any rate, being as you are, at the head of a large establishment, you can influence his fellow-servants to be diligent in their prayers for him, that God would yet give him grace and space for repentance."

February 26th.—On arriving at the Hall yesterday afternoon, the first news that I heard was that Alick Martin had, about an hour before, fallen out of his chair in a fit, (he has not been able to sleep in a bed for the last two months,) that he was black in the face when taken up, and that for some time he was supposed to be dying. Under the remedies applied by the medical attendant he somewhat rallied. I saw Mr. Graves subsequently, who informed me that he had left him in so nervous and excited a state, that a direct intimation on my part of the greatness of his danger, would in all probability cause his immediate death. It appears that so lately as within the last week, the unhappy man had contrived to get ale and spirits smuggled into his bed-room by the help of an ignorant stable

boy, nay, that having been debarred from a greater supply from the Hall cellar than the doctor permitted, he had actually run into debt for spirits at the next market-town, to the amount of two pounds. So devoted is he to liquor!

O that those who are hesitating between self-indulgence and self-denial, that those who allow themselves to commit sin under the impression that they can leave it off, and forsake it, when they please, and who think that a death-bed is the place for repenting of their sins, and settling their accounts with God, could see the sights which a clergyman is compelled to see continually! Surely, one such case as that of Alick Martin would be enough to make them know that they have fallen into a deadly error, would compel them to realize that truth which men are so very slow to believe, but which all experience goes to confirm, that, for the most part, men die as they have lived, and that at any rate the cases are few and far between where any marked change of character takes place on a dying bed!

When first I knew Alick Martin, he was as promising a lad, and one who had as fair opportunities of becoming a good man, and doing his

duty in that state of life to which it pleased God to call him, as any young person who has been under my pastoral care. He came, when a mere boy, from a neighbouring parish, to work in the Hall gardens. There he was found to be so handy and obliging, that he soon attracted the notice of our present Squire's mother, who was then alive; and he was ultimately taken into the house as her page. The old gardener strongly objected to the change. "You will turn a good labourer," he said, "into a bad footman. The boy is well enough as boys go, but I have seen that in him which satisfies me that he will never be able to stand the temptations of the servants' hall. He is a boy that wants a sharp eye over him, and few indulgences. While I can look after him, and he lives on what he can get at home, he is likely to be steady; but if he gets to beef and beer, and goes up to London with the family, it's a great chance if you don't ruin him, body or soul, or may be both."

"Why so, Yates?" asked the old lady.

"Because, ma'am, he's a boy that can't say No: and because he's inclined to put off till to-morrow what he might do to-day."

Blunt Mr. Yates's objections had no weight

with Mrs. Fielding; the boy was taken into the household, and for a time the gardener seemed a false prophet, Alick was as handy within as he had been without doors.

It was at that time that he was first brought into communication with myself. He was old enough to be one of the candidates for Confirmation, and he used to come down to the vicarage for instruction. He was sharper, and more fluent, and readier with an answer than most of his companions, but I remember, even then, being oppressed with the feeling that his was rather head-knowledge than heart-knowledge, and that there was none, or at any rate but little of the earnestness and reverence which I witnessed with satisfaction in many a duller boy.

Confirmation is one of those mysterious turning-points in our lives, on which it would often seem as though our eternal destiny depended. No doubt God vouchsafes us many such, in His mercy, throughout the course of our mortal career, but some seem to ourselves more marked than others, as if by the line of conduct there chosen the issue of a life was determined. The notion may be true or false, but it has at least this advantage connected with it, that to

those who hold it, it affords a most urgent warning never to let slip an opportunity, never to put off a known duty, never to delay it.

Of those who were confirmed at the same time with Alick Martin all, I believe, received the Holy Communion for the first time on the following Sunday except himself. When, after the Confirmation, I spoke to him of his attendance at that blessed Sacrament, he seemed fully to enter into all I said, to have neither doubts nor scruples, even to wish to avail himself of so great a privilege; but he hoped he might be allowed to defer it till the next time, till the first Sunday in the next month. "No time like the present time, my boy," said I, "why do you wish to absent yourself?" "I am very anxious to go home next Sunday, Sir, to see my sister." "Next Sunday is the Wake Sunday at Weston, I suppose, is it?" The lad blushed, and answered that it was.

I was grieved, but hardly surprised, at finding how little serious thought he could have as to the nature of those vows which he had so lately repeated with his own lips. So I spoke to him very kindly, but very earnestly, especially pointing out how much of temptation and sin were the accompaniments of a village wake, so that

no person at all in earnest about his soul, would have any thing to do with one, and urging him to deny himself, and cross his inclinations of going home, and thus shew his heavenly Father that he was determined to devote himself to His service at once and for ever.

He left me, promising to follow my advice, but Sunday came, and he was not among those who presented themselves at the Lord's table. During the month ensuing, I had occasion to observe that if he happened to see me at a distance, he contrived to avoid me, and that whenever I was at the Hall, he was sure to be out of the way. However I was determined not to let him slip out of my hands, if I could help it, and accordingly, having enquired for him on one occasion, and been told that he was out, I said quietly, that I could wait till he came in. There was no escape, for it was late in the afternoon, and the family dinner-hour was at hand, so he presently made his appearance. After some confusion and awkward excuses, he seemed to pluck up courage, and said, the Holy Communion was "a very serious thing," and that he wished for more time for consideration before he received it. I answered, as on a former occasion, that there was no time like

the present, and that if he had any real doubts or scruples, I was quite ready to help and instruct him to the best of my power, but that this was one of those cases in which delay was not likely to be of service to him, on the contrary, the longer he delayed, the less likely he was to be fit or willing to approach the Lord's table. I repeated the instructions he had already received as to what is required in the way of preparation, and reminded him that none of us go there because we are worthy, but because we desire to become more worthy.

He was much obliged to me, he answered, for what I had said, and would think it over, and hoped to come, if not on Sunday next, yet very shortly; he only wished to put it off for a little while.

"Well, Alick, I cannot force you to come; but I repeat my warning, if you do not come *at once*, the probability is that you will never come. God is not mocked. If He sees you trifling with Him, He may leave you to yourself, and let you go your own way without giving you any further warnings. Remember the case of Felix. He trembled once at the warnings addressed to him by St. Paul; but he fancied he should attend better at a more convenient

season. So far as we know that season never came, and the trembling-fit which might have saved him, passed away for ever."

Once more the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated in Elmhurst church, but Alick Martin withdrew as soon as the sermon was ended. Another month passed, and by that time the family at the Hall were gone up to London for the season; thence they removed to the sea-side; and so it was late in autumn before they got home again.

To Alick Martin the change from the country to the town had proved one of unqualified evil. All the bad points about him had become worse, and there was that bold look and off-hand manner which shewed that he was aping the ways of the most offensive (and, it is to be feared, most vicious and profligate) class of servants,—the footmen of "great houses" in London. All his simplicity and modesty were departed from him, and when I met him one day, and enquired whether he had become a communicant, he answered in a tone which might have come from Gallio himself, that he "hoped there would be time enough to think of those things by and by." There was nothing of which I could complain in his manner to myself,—nothing saucy or impertinent; but

he evidently wished me to infer that he did not consider himself in any respect amenable to me for his religious conduct, and that the less I interfered with him the better he should be pleased.

I soon saw that my apprehensions were realized. At first there was nothing very marked in Alick Martin's misconduct. He was very rarely to be seen at Church, and his visits to the House of God grew rarer and rarer, till at length they almost wholly ceased. Occasionally his master would remark upon his absence, when for a Sunday or two he might be seen in his place, and then would absent himself for months. Thus he was living without God, and in gradual process of hardening his heart. By and by rumours reached me that he was growing "very gay," as my informant expressed it, in other words, that he was in the habit of indulging in those fleshly lusts which war against the soul, which, more than any other sin, corrupt and taint the whole man, defiling the mind and conscience, grieving and driving away the Holy Spirit, who made, in our baptism, our mortal bodies His living temples.

After awhile, further tidings reached me that he had become partial to liquors, that he was often seen in a state of at least partial intoxica-

tion, and indeed, was not rarely drunk. Had any proof of this reached his master, Alick would have been dismissed from his situation: but many things go on in large establishments of which it is impossible that the master should be cognizant, so long as servants feel bound together by a system of false honour to conceal each other's offences. A tale-bearer is a very odious person, whatever be his rank in life; and a servant who tries to exalt himself in the good opinion of his master by contrasting his own faithfulness with the faults or failures of his fellow-servants, is deservedly avoided and disliked. But this is a very different thing from warning a master of evils going on in his household with the motive of checking them, and thus preventing a master's reputation from suffering, and a fellow-servant from getting into confirmed habits of sin. O that servants could be brought to see, as God sees, the wickedness and cruelty of shielding and concealing the delinquencies of their companions! It is wickedness, because, in so far as they see their master injured either in character or pocket, by one of their fellow-servants, and do not apprize him of it, they are abettors and accomplices of the crime: it is cruelty, because such an act is, in reality, the helping a fellow-creature in his

NEVER CAME.

11. And yet this is one committed in every house-
e most part, but two oc-
s will speak out honestly
a companion : the one is
e injured by his proceed-
he has left his situation,
his former transgressions
; master. Then, indeed,
as though they thought
redemption, when speak-
s, would be a sufficient
ce when speaking might

Elmhurst Hall who was
straightforward enough,
"fair business" to apprise
Martin's propensities, and
g time in his wickedness
ever.

urning through the park
person who lay dying in
ne Sunday night, I was
ound like a groan very
y lantern in the direction
aw a man lying under a
nspection, I found to be

Martin in a state of extreme and helpless intoxication. I soon saw that I could do nothing with him by myself, so I proceeded at once to the Hall stables, and gave notice where he was to be found.

The next morning, while I was reflecting with myself what was the best course to be pursued with respect to him, it was announced that he was at the vicarage, and wished to see me. Accordingly he was soon in my study, in a state of extreme distress and agitation, pouring forth all manner of excuses, beseeching me to "forgive him," and not to tell Mr. Fielding; for that if I did, he knew he should be turned off without a character, and that would be his ruin.

"I have nothing to forgive, Alick," I said; "your offence is not against me, but against God, whose day you profaned, and whose Holy Spirit you have grieved by your great offence."

"But indeed, Sir, I am deeply grieved at having committed it, and very much ashamed of myself. And it was not altogether my own fault; I was led into it. Yesterday was the Wake-Sunday at Weston, when I always go home for the day, and"

"The Wake-Sunday, was it? Alick, how many

years have passed away since the Wake-Sunday was your excuse for not presenting yourself at the Lord's table?"

"I am not sure, Sir," he answered, in some confusion. "Five, or six. Six, I believe."

"And I warned you then, did I not, that if you put off your attendance at the Communion for such a reason as that, the probability was, that in spite of your intentions and promises, you would never be seen there?"

He could not deny it.

"Have you ever been at the Lord's table?"

He dropped his head, and answered that he had not: "but," added he, "I do mean to go there."

"God forbid!" I answered hastily. "What! a confirmed drunkard to go there, with his sin unforsaken? That would, indeed, be to eat and drink condemnation to yourself!"

"No, no, Sir. I did not mean just now: but before I die. I know I am not in a right state now."

"Alick," I replied, "one who is not in a right state to receive the Holy Communion, is not in a fit state either to live or die!"

"God help me, Sir, I fear that is my state."

"I fear it is," I replied, "I cannot doubt that

it is. But He to whom you pray to help you, will help you (if He sees you in earnest) to become what now you are not. He can give you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you. Are you in the habit of praying to Him?"

"Sometimes, Sir, that is to say, when I remember."

I shook my head. "If you had prayed, prayer would have made you leave off sinning. As it is, sinning, I fear, has made you leave of praying."

"But, indeed, Sir, I used to say my prayers very regularly for a long while, but I did not find I was any the better for it."

"How could you expect to be, while all the time you were plunging deeper and deeper into the mire of sin, and forgetting God and His laws more and more? What has been your life ever since you were confirmed? You then vowed to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. But what has been your course? Do not think, that because I have said but little that I have not had my eye upon you. Are you not a stranger in God's House? Are you not notoriously an unchaste and unclean person? Are you not fast becoming an habitual drunkard?"

“You are hard upon a fallen man, Sir,” replied Martin bitterly.

“No, I am not,” I answered. “But my office is to warn you of the truth, and to tell you those things which others may be too false, or cowardly, or careless to tell you. And if you want a more unprejudiced witness than you think me, you have two at hand who will not deceive, a witness from without and a witness from within. Turn to the first looking-glass you meet with, and there you will see one who is an old man at five and twenty, one who will be a dead man before he is thirty, if he continues his present courses. Turn to the voice of conscience, and you will hear what is the path you have been pursuing, and whither it will lead you.”

“I am afraid, Sir, that somebody has maligned me to you. I am not so bad as you think. I know I have been too gay, but I assure you I am sincere in my intention to reform.”

“When do you mean to begin?” I asked.

“As soon as I can,” was the reply.

“Do you mean to begin to-day? now, at this present moment? If you do, I will pray with you for God’s pardon on the past, and give you such advice and rules, plain and few, as may

help you, by God's grace, to keep to your resolutions."

He hesitated. He knew, he said, he should be wanted at the Hall: there was company expected. Perhaps I would excuse him now, and he would come another day.

"If you go away now," I said sadly and solemnly, "you will never come again. If you put off the work of repentance, knowingly, and wilfully put it off to another day, mark my words, that day will never come."

"Oh Sir, do not say so. I hope, I feel sure it will. But, Sir, I trust you will not get me turned out of my place. I trust you will not mention to Mr. Fielding what has occurred."

"I shall not be so bad a friend either to yourself or Mr. Fielding as not to tell him; but I shall take time to consider as to the recommendation with which I shall accompany my statement. That will, in great measure, depend upon yourself:" So he left me.

The end was that Alick Martin's continuance in his situation was made conditional upon his breaking through his habit of drunkenness, for it was feared that if he were dismissed at once he might be driven to despair, and so all hope of amendment done away.

It has almost become a proverb that no drunkard is ever really reformed, so difficult is it for such persons to do without the excitement of drink when once they have accustomed themselves to it. And there were few encouraging symptoms in Alick's case, for he seemed to have no steadiness of purpose, and his habitual shrinking from beginning the work of reformation at once, were much against him.

However, his kind-hearted master acted for the best, and for a time a marked change took place in the unhappy man's habits. He was never seen in liquor; and he was for several months regular at Church: but alas! there was no evidence of true repentance, and real conversion. He was one of those who in time of temptation are sure to fall away because they have no firmness or depth of principle.

About a year ago Mr. Fielding's health was in so unsatisfactory a state that he was obliged to go abroad, and the consequence was that Martin, who, from having been a page, had gradually worked his way up to the office of under-butler, was now left with almost all his time upon his own hands, for he had little more to do than to take charge of and clean the family plate.

This made him idle, and the result of idleness

was that he rapidly relapsed into all his former habits, and his taste for drink assumed an aggravated form. Ale was discarded for spirits.

So he went on, day after day, and week after week, till his health was quite broken; dropsical and other symptoms of a failing constitution made their appearance, and about a fortnight ago he had a frightful epileptic seizure. Hoping that at length I might find my way to his conscience, I lost no time in visiting him. On the day succeeding that of his attack I called at the Hall, and to my surprise found him in his pantry. He looked miserably haggard and ill, with swelled legs and an uncertain step, and trembling hands; and the expression of nervous distress which spread over his countenance as soon as he saw me, shewed me at once that I was an unwelcome visitor. But I felt that I had now to grapple with what probably would be a last opportunity.

I enquired as to his condition kindly and sympathizingly: but I soon saw that it was his wish to make as light of his illness as possible. He had been rather unwell for some weeks past, he said, and had had, he believed, an attack of giddiness, which caused him to fall, yesterday: but to-day he was much better, nearly well. And

then he took up a piece of leather which was lying on the table, and began to rub some of his spoons, by way of a hint to me that he had no time for conversation.

I took no notice of this, and went straight to the point at once ; “ No, Alick, you are not nearly well, and I should fear are never likely to be. It is clear that you have undermined your constitution, and that your state is becoming a very precarious one.”

No answer ; but a nervous twitching at the corners of the mouth, and the leather applied to the plate more vigorously.

“ I think you know me well enough, Alick, to be sure that I do not say this to pain you unnecessarily : but I stand in the position of one who has a message to you from God, and whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I must deliver it, that so at least the guilt of your blood may not rest upon my head. I am come this day to warn you once more that your course of life for a long time past has been one of utter forgetfulness of God, and defiance of Him ; to intreat you to consider what the consequences will be to yourself, and so to induce you, if so it may be, to devote to Him in repentance the remnants of that life which you have so miserably wasted ; and lastly, to assure

you of my earnest desire to be of all the service I can to you, as your minister.”

“Oh, Sir, I don’t doubt your good intentions towards me; and I am much obliged to you; but I am more nervous than I used to be, and I don’t find myself able to hold a religious conversation. I hope I am not so bad as you think me. I hope I can lift up my heart to God, though I may not be able to talk like a clergyman.”

“I hope that you both can and do lift up your heart in prayer to Him whom you have so long neglected, and if your heart be right with Him, it matters little whether you can talk on religious subjects or no. My object is not to lead you to talk, but to induce you to think; and to urge upon you that time is swiftly passing,—that the night cometh, when no man can work.”

Conscience apparently here aided me, for the unhappy man fell into a state of extreme agitation, and threw himself into a chair which stood near.

“I know what you would say, Sir; and I trust I am not forgetful that life is uncertain; but really these discussions agitate me so much! I hope you will excuse me, Sir, but I am not equal to them.”

“Every day that you put off the work of looking into the true state of your soul, the task will become more and more agitating. You are more equal to hearing and knowing the truth now, than you will be when disease has taken a greater hold upon you.”

“Surely, Sir, the delay of a few days till I am stronger” (he forgot he had just boasted that he was “nearly well !”) “will be no great matter.”

“Nay,” said I, “how know you, if you neglect God to-day, that He will give you even a few days more? We cannot tell what a day may bring forth. Only of this we are sure, that He allots to none of us more days than are needful for the business of working out our salvation ; and that they who have wasted time in running the race that is set before them, cannot but be far behind, cannot but be in extreme danger of not being able to make up the time they have lost.”

“Sir, you have such a stern, I may say austere way of putting things, that you quite make religion repulsive to me.”

“I am here, Alick, to tell you the simple truth ; not, God forbid ! disposed to keep back one single word from you of all God’s gracious promises in Christ Jesus, our only Saviour, to the returning prodigal ; but, on the other hand, not daring to

preach peace where there is no peace, or where, at any rate, there ought not to be peace. Far, far better that you should know the truth, and profit by your knowledge, at any cost, or present pain and misery, rather than that you should slumber on in false security, to wake at last in hell. Think, Alick, how many warnings you have had, how many warnings you have neglected, and how after each neglected warning you have fallen into a worse condition than you were before! The warning you now hear, may be your last. Are you determined to neglect it, as you have neglected all the others?"

So direct an appeal seemed intolerable. The sick man started up, gasped for breath, and then in an irritated tone exclaimed, as he busied himself once more among the plate, "Indeed, Sir, you are too hard upon me. I am not well to-day. And I have so much work to do, that I must beg you to put off what you had more to say. I assure you, Sir," he added, scarcely knowing, I believe, what he said, "I assure you I have no time."

"Well, I cannot compel you to listen to me, Alick, if you are determined not to do so. But there is one thing which you must find time for, and that, if I mistake not, speedily."

“*Must!*” cried he hastily, with an expression of something between a smile and a sneer on his face—“for what must I find time?”

“To die, and meet your God, Alick!”

And with those words I left him.

The same night he had a succession of fits, and thenceforward was confined to his bed-chamber. I have seen him daily, but sometimes he has been dozing, and sometimes in so much pain that it was impossible to fix his attention; latterly he has, at times, been wandering or light-headed. I have talked to him, read to him, prayed with him, sometimes, I fear, against his inclination. At other times he has assented in a dull apathetic manner to all I have said: but nothing seems to have reached his heart. Such was the state of things when Mrs. Miles came to me yesterday morning. I tremble for the tidings I may hear to-morrow.

February 27th.—The medicines prescribed by Mr. Graves yesterday have produced so much temporary relief, that when I visited Alick Martin this morning, he seemed quite revived. But alas, alas! the day has passed without my being able to make any impression on his heart. All his perceptions seem dulled and blunted. It is as if he could not take in, or understand

his true condition. He shed a few tears, when I told him that he must look on himself as a dying man, but the nervous flutter was soon followed by a stolid vacant stare. He did not object to my praying beside him: he even said, "Thank you, Sir," as I rose from my knees, but there was nothing to shew that he was attending, or feeling, or joining in what was said. And all that I could elicit when I tried to probe his spiritual disease more deeply was that he was very tired, and hoped I would be pleased to put off my remarks till the next day. "To-morrow I shall be happy to listen."

"To-morrow, Alick, you may be in another world. You are tolerably free from suffering to-day: your mind is clear to-day: do not lose these precious hours. God gives you one more call. 'To-day if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart!'"

"To-morrow, Sir, to-morrow!" was the rejoinder; and with that he turned his face to the wall, as if resolute that he would hear no more.

May God have mercy upon him, and give life and power to my unsuccessful and imperfect ministrations!

February 28th.—Alick Martin reported to be

much worse. He has been rambling and light-headed ever since midnight,—so Mrs. Miles sends me word. On arriving at the Hall, and proceeding to his room, I was met at the foot of the stairs by one of his fellow-servants, who described him as having been raving all the morning, and that he had now become so violent that it required the strength of two men to hold him in his bed. “It is no use your going to him, Sir: you might as well talk to a tree; he is so changed in appearance: it will only shock you.”

“It will not be that which will shock me,” I replied, “and I would not on any account stay away. If he be, as you say, quite unable to pray for himself, so much the greater is the need that we should pray for him.”

On entering the sick man’s room, the sight which presented itself to me was indeed an appalling one. A strong man on either side of the bed was forcibly retaining the patient where he lay. Poor fellow! his face and head were much swollen with dropsy; he appeared to be in a profuse perspiration, the effect of his violent struggles; his eyes were fixed and glaring; his looks wild; his voice hoarse and altered. He spoke or shouted continually. Now and then he

seemed to allude to former occupations, but generally his purpose seemed to be to drive some invisible objects which terrified him from crowding round his bed;—a circumstance of very common occurrence, where there is fever or head-affection;—nevertheless there was something inexpressibly awful in seeing one who had been the slave of sin for so many years, and who was, as it seemed, so near the threshold of the unseen world, struggling to escape from unseen tormentors,—now throwing his arms wildly around him,—now striving to hide his face in the bed-clothes, and more than once shrieking out in terror, “Keep them off! keep them off.”

Of course he did not know me. It was vain speaking to him, so I addressed myself to his fellow-servants, of whom there were several in the room. “How awful a lesson is this, how terrible a warning to every one of us, not to delay, no, not for a single hour, the work of repentance! This is the man who for years past has been putting off that work to a future day, to a day that in all likelihood may never come. Surely it is a sore tempting of God to trust to a death-bed repentance, as it is called! Surely the probability is that to those who reckon on it, it will never be vouchsafed! I would not speak un-

kindly or uncharitably, but I must speak plainly. You all know what Alick's life has been, and here is the end of it. It is not for us to pass judgment on him. He, perhaps, had never such a warning as we have before our eyes this day. But at any rate we shall be without excuse in the day of judgment, if we fail to profit by what we now see." I was continually interrupted in this short address by the struggles and cries and exclamations of the sick man; so I only added, "I had hoped that it might have pleased God in His mercy to have afforded him the sense and the will to join in our prayers, and perhaps He may yet do so, in answer to our petitions; all however that we can do now is to be earnest in prayer for him, that God would yet give him grace to repent, and time for repentance. Let us form no hasty conclusions as to his state, but while we intercede for him, let us pray for strength to amend ourselves!"

Then we all kneeled down, and I offered such prayers as were suitable in behalf of an impenitent sinner in a state of delirium.

March 1st.—Mr. Graves, the surgeon, announces that mortification has commenced in Martin's legs, and consequently in a few hours more he must pass to his account. The scene

in the chamber of the dying man was a mere repetition of that of yesterday, only the sufferer's appearance is more shocking than it was, owing to the progress of the disease. I remained with him some hours, and prayed with his fellow-servants, for him and for ourselves, from time to time : but Alick himself never returned to a state of consciousness for so much as a single minute.

March 2nd.—Alick Martin is dead. He continued in the same state of delirium all the early part of the night. Mr. Graves, with some difficulty, induced him to swallow a composing draught, after which he burst out into singing, and continually sang himself to sleep, the first rest he had had for eight and forty hours.

About an hour afterwards, he opened his eyes, looked slowly round, gave a deep sigh, and then closed them upon this world for ever.

I am told that since his death, decay has gone on so rapidly, that his body must be laid in the grave to-morrow.

But the soul,—the *soul*?

NOTHING LOST IN THE TELLING.

“ Now wasn’t that shocking, mother ?”

“ Wasn’t what shocking, Frank ?”

“ Why about the Walkers.”

“ I’m sure I don’t know, Frank,” replied Mrs. Wood, in the tone of one who was not attending very carefully to what was said to her. Mrs. Wood was busy ironing her caps, and she wanted to finish her work while daylight lasted, and the sun had already set.

“ Well, mother, but wasn’t it wonderful ?”

“ Bless the child ; wasn’t what wonderful ?”

“ Why what Mrs. Faddy told me about the pedlar, and the pie, and the poison.”

“ I dare say it was, Frank ; Mrs. Faddy’s tales are apt to be wonderful.”

“ But don’t you think it wonderful ?”

“ What ?” inquired Mrs. Wood, as she laid down one iron, and took up another, with a look

of ignorance which betrayed a complete unconsciousness that Frank had been telling her a long story, the whole of which had been lost upon her.

“Why I do believe that you haven’t listened to a word I said.”

“I beg your pardon, Frank, but I am afraid I have lost the best part of it. I heard you beginning with Sally Faddy as your authority for your story, and so I thought more of what I was doing than of what you had to tell. When you have known Sally as long as I have, you will do the same.”

Frank looked vexed. “I can’t think why you dislike Mrs. Faddy, mother. She is very kind to us all.”

“I don’t dislike her, Frank. I dislike her gossiping ways, and her carelessness about truth very much, but I have a regard for her, and wish with all my heart that she would break herself of her fault. I was at school with her, forty years ago, I was in service with her afterwards, and we have been neighbours ever since she came to take care of her aunt, so if any body knows Sally, I do ; and I say again, Frank, that I have very kindly feelings towards her, but I have seen a black spot spread and spread,

till it has quite spoiled her whole character. She cannot tell a plain truth ; she must always exaggerate ; and always add something of her own inventing by way of increasing the effect of what she has to tell. The consequence of this is, that it is quite impossible to trust her about the simplest matter of fact ; and without being at all an ill-natured or mischievously inclined person, she is the greatest maker of mischief in all Elmhurst."

" But, mother, every body says how kind-hearted she is, and how good to her neighbours, and how attentive to her tiresome, deaf, old aunt Fitchel."

" So she is, Frank, and she has many other good qualities besides, but nothing can make up for the want of truth."

" Do you think she means to deceive, mother ?"

" Not by any means, Frank. I am confident that nothing would tempt her to tell a lie to benefit or to shield herself. She believes as surely as you and I do that the devil is the father of lies, and that lying is one of the most offensive of all sins in the sight of God ; and yet through love of talking, or desire of being the first to tell the news, from some infirmity

of vanity, or self-importance, she has allowed herself to embellish what she has to say with circumstances which are likely to attract the wonder of her hearers; she is so anxious to make the best, as it is called, of a good story, that her conscience has become dead to the sin of exaggeration; the habit has crept on insensibly by little and little, and she has probably no notion of the extent to which she habitually perverts the truth. Unhappily for her too, she has a great deal of spare time. You remember the words of the hymn, that

“Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”

And somewhere else I have read, that

“Never was there idle brain,
But bred an idle thought.”

Between idle thoughts, and idle hands, it would be strange if poor Sally did not give vent to idle words. Now then, tell me shortly what was the shocking and wonderful thing to which I ought to have listened, and which I see you will not be satisfied till you have told me.”

“Well, mother,” replied Frank, “you know what a rough, ill-tempered man pedlar Penson is.”

“I know he is rough-mannered, and has a gruff voice, and has very big black whiskers, and

an angry-looking scarlet neckcloth, which looks something like a turkey's wattle : will that do."

"No, mother ; he must be very ill-tempered and wicked too. Do you know he called at the park farm the day before yesterday, and though he had all the trouble of opening his pack, and spreading out his wares on the kitchen dresser, not a thing could he sell, for just as the maids were going to buy, in came Mrs. Walker and said she wouldn't have his trumpery among her puff paste, and so he had better pack off himself, and his pack too."

"Well, but Frank, that rather looks as if Mrs. Walker and not pedlar Penson was the ill-tempered person."

"You haven't heard the end of my story, that is, of Mrs. Faddy's. Mrs. Walker gave a dinner party that day, and so, being very busy, she might have been rather hasty, but she didn't bear malice and hatred in her heart, like this wicked pedlar, mother."

"But what did he do?"

"I'm coming to that directly, mother. Penson did as he was bid, and packed up his things, and went out of the kitchen ; but at some moment when all their backs were turned, what do you think he did?"

“ Drew the leg of mutton from the spit, I warrant ye,” said Mrs. Wood with a smile, “ and slipped it in the pocket of his rough coat.”

“ O worse than that, much worse,” continued Frank, not remarking his mother’s countenance ; and then adding very gravely, in a low voice, “ He actually tried to poison the whole family.”

“ Indeed !” exclaimed Mrs. Wood. “ And how was that proved ?”

“ Why mother, when the apple-pie was carved at dinner, the very first time the spoon was put into the dish it brought up a paper full of needles, (put in, no doubt, to choke them,) and three brass thimbles, and afterwards, no less than nine more thimbles were found among the apples ?”

“ Was that all ?” enquired Mrs. Wood, but in a tone which made Frank feel that she was not nearly as much horrified as she ought to have been.

“ No, mother ; there was ever so much verdigris besides.”

“ Are you sure about the verdigris, Frank ? Verdigris, I believe, is the rust of brass. I don’t see why a pedlar should carry such an article in his pack ; and though it is said to be very poisonous, he was not likely to carry poison

about with him, for the purpose of putting it into the food of those who made no purchases of him. Are you sure about the verdigris?"

Frank coloured up, and hesitated, for his conscience told him that he had not repeated what Mrs. Faddy had said quite correctly. He had caught her trick of exaggeration.

"Mrs. Faddy told me that she dared say there was ever so much verdigris."

"I am afraid, Frank, she dares to say many things for which she has no authority; what she meant to infer in this case was that the acid of the apples had probably had such an effect on the brass as to produce verdigris: that might, or might not happen: but at any rate she did not positively assert that which you did. O Frank, beware of exaggeration. Remember what I said just now. Remember that any thing which is more than the truth is a lie."

"I was wrong, mother, very wrong, but indeed I did not mean to deceive."

"I know that; no more does Sally Faddy; but now look at her story: there is falsehood on the very face of it. If the pedlar wanted to choke folks would he have left the needles in their paper? If he wanted to poison them, would he have managed so clumsily, as to put

brass thimbles where they were sure to be seen ?”

“ Well, mother, I must say that one thing did strike me as very odd, which was this ; Mrs. Faddy said, that that very same afternoon he called at the farm again, and actually made a claim to be paid for a paper full of needles, and a dozen thimbles, which he declared he missed from his pack. Mrs. Faddy spoke of this as a proof of his audaciousness, to me it rather looks as a proof that however so strange a thing had happened, he could not have really meant to poison the Walkers.”

“ Shall I unravel the whole mystery to you, Frank ?”

Frank opened his eyes very wide, and exclaimed, “ why I do believe you know all about it !”

“ I do believe I do,” replied his mother laughing, “ for Mrs. Walker called here this afternoon, and told me how when her back was turned, that little mischievous, spoiled boy of her sister, had slipped the pedlar’s thimbles into the pie-dish, and covered them with fruit, so that she laid the crust on without noticing them ; how she had been so thoughtless as to tell the story in Sally Faddy’s presence, and to add that ‘ it was enough

to poison them ;' how Sally had repeated the story, as she had first heard it, and before it had been found out that it was the boy's mischief ; and how Sally had embellished the tale with additions of her own, till, without having any malicious intention, and out of sheer thoughtlessness and love of gossip, she had actually imputed the crime of murder to pedlar Penson."

"And was that really and truly all, mother?" asked Frank, in a very disappointed tone.

"Yes, really and truly all," replied Mrs. Wood, imitating her son's manner. "But why should that make you seem so downcast? Would it have been better, do you think, that all the Walkers should have been poisoned, and the pedlar hanged for poisoning them?"

"No, mother, not better; only" (with a little hesitation) "it would have made a better story."

Frank's mother looked very grave when she heard this, and said, "my dear boy, you may depend upon it that if you allow yourself to think or speak in this way, you will soon fall into the same habit of sin as that which has done such infinite mischief to poor Sally's character. Surely you remember where it is written, 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-

bearer among thy people ;' and who is it that has declared, that 'for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' Once get in the way of repeating matters concerning your neighbours, and you will soon have no scruple in 'making the best of a good story,' as it is called ; in other words you will get into the habit of breaking the ninth Commandment in more ways than I can tell : you will be a liar, and a false witness, and an evil-speaker, and a slanderer. How should you like to have your character taken away as you, Frank, and Sally Faddy took away the pedlar's ?"

Frank drooped his head and made no reply, for his conscience told him he was wrong. And Mrs. Wood said no more, for she wished her son to reflect on her words. And so he did, but somehow or other, through that kind of self-deceit by which the devil tempts us to continue in sins to which we are inclined, Frank contrived to persuade himself that his mother had made too much of a little matter, and that it was only because she did not like her neighbour Faddy, that she had spoken so strongly about making the best of a good story. Still his own mind was not quite at ease, when he

thought how he had himself helped to impute evil motives to the pedlar.

A week passed away, and the circumstance had almost gone out of his recollection, when one evening as he was returning from school, he found himself brought by a sudden turn in the narrow lane, within a few yards of one, whose pack, red shawl, and black whiskers proclaimed him to be none other than pedlar Penson.

The thought rushed into Frank's mind that the pedlar would have heard of the false reports which had been spread with respect to him, and conscience suggested to Frank that he himself had not been quite innocent in the matter. What if that great, strong, cross-looking, red-faced-looking man should lay hold of him, and call him to account for what he had said? The very thought made Frank turn, first hot, and then cold, and then, as he afterwards expressed it, "all no how." As to facing the pedlar, it was out of the question. He dared not. What a relief when he spied a gap in the hedge a few yards in advance! To be sure, he must come almost within arm's reach of the pedlar; but there was no help for it. On he dashed as quick as he could, and bounded through the gap when his imaginary enemy was about two

yards off. "Look before you leap," says the proverb; but Frank had no time to think of proverbs; and the consequence was that in the very act of jumping the ditch on the other side of the hedge, his foot caught in a bramble, and down he went, head foremost, into a bed of nettles. Sharply enough they stung him, but at first he did not feel the pain, so terrified was he at hearing a gruff voice, which he recognised but too well, "Hillo! young one! what are you running away for? Come back!"

Come back! no, not if his life depended on it. Up he got, set off at his topmost speed, dashed across the fields, never stopping, and never looking behind him, (but nothing doubting that the pedlar was close at his heels,) till he found himself quite breathless and exhausted in the village street.

Even here he did not stop running, for he felt as if he should not be safe till he got home. However, he could not keep up his former pace, and so as he passed one of the cottages he heard one of his neighbours say to some one standing near, "See, see! there's Frank Wood! how he runs! Poor boy! well to be sure, it's a true saying, 'bad news flies fast!'"

"Bad news!" thought Frank to himself,

“ what can that mean.” But he did not stop to enquire.

“ Frank ! Frank !” cried a voice, from the next cottage doorway that he passed, “ How is she now ? has the doctor been ? Joe says he saw him galloping down your way like mad, half an hour ago. What does he say ? I hope things are not so bad as was thought ?”

Frank stopped, for he was bewildered. A woman’s quick eye saw that the enquiry had not been understood, and good-natured Mary Holland ran down to him and said in a sympathizing tone, “ ah, I see you have not heard. I’m afraid your mother has met with an accident.”

“ My mother !” exclaimed Frank in an agony of dismay. “ Oh ! do tell me what has happened.”

“ Indeed I don’t know any particulars. I made sure you could tell me. It was Lovel’s wife told me. She said how shocking it was that Mrs. Wood had been found lying in the gravel-pit in the cow-pasture with both her legs broke !”

Frank stayed to hear no more. He felt as if he could hardly breathe, he was so spent, but on he ran. He could not cry. He could not

speaking. His throat was so dry, that when in a few minutes he spied Sarah Lovel coming down the road, it was with the greatest difficulty he put the question to her whether it was true that his mother's legs were broke.

"True enough, I'm afraid, Frank! more's the pity! leastwise they say one of her legs is broke in two or three places, and it's very well if the other isn't."

"But how do you know this, Mrs. Lovel? Have you been up at our house?"

"I? no, bless you, I haven't been from home all day; it was Martha that waits upon Mrs. Fitchel that told me. She was going down to the shop for butter, and says she. . . ."

"But Mrs. Lovel, how did it happen?"

"Aye, that's where it is. Nobody knows: and it seems so queer that she should have fallen into the gravel pit. However, Martha was in a great hurry, and couldn't tell me more: but you'll pass Mrs. Faddy's in your way home, and she'll be able to tell you all about it. Will you stop and take a drink of water. You'll faint may be if you don't. Poor boy! Poor boy! You must keep up heart though. We must all take what is sent us."

Frank drank the water eagerly, and hurried on.

Before long he overtook Martha herself: but Martha was in what her mistress was wont to call one of her stupid ways. She had forgotten one of her errands. Mrs. Faddy had given her two: there was the butter, a pound, fourteen pence; and four-pence over made the eighteen-pence; but what was to have been done with the four-pence she could not remember: she could only remember one thing at a time; and she was so put about with respect to the errand (for she knew Mrs. Faddy would send her back again as soon as she got home) that she couldn't call to mind all she had heard about Mrs. Wood's accident; only it was all true. John Lees the cowman had met Mrs. Fitchel as he was going to the doctor, and told her as how Mrs. Wood's leg was broke; and Martha added it must no doubt be very bad, for Mrs. Faddy said there were sure to be "compound fractions."

Poor Frank knew no more about compound fractures than did Martha herself: but he heard enough to redouble his pace.

Once more, however, he was fated to be stopped. Mrs. Faddy was standing at her little wicket on the look-out for Martha or any passing event, and Frank could not pass her without enquiring if it was all true.

“ Oh yes, yes,” said Mrs. Faddy, “ not a doubt about it. Aunt Fitchel had it all from John Lees. He said he missed her as soon as he came down to the farm this morning,” (this sounded very odd to Frank, who had seen his mother speaking to the cow-man, just before he set off for school,) “ and so he went to look for her, and they were the dreadful moans that led him to the gravel pit.”

The thought of his mother whom he so dearly loved, lying in such a condition, gave poor Frank the much needed relief of tears, and in the midst of his sobs, he found himself better able to think and listen than before.

“ But how did they know she was so much injured?” he asked.

“ My aunt Fitchel said that John’s very words were ‘ as how Mrs. Wood had broke her leg, and they found her crumpled up all in a heap in the gravel pit.’ And I’m sorry to say,” added Mrs. Faddy, “ that there is every reason to think that things must be very bad, for when soon after hearing it, I saw Dick Mudge going to the blacksmith’s, and asked him what he had heard ; he said he had not heard any thing about it, but as he passed your back yard, his horse started, which made him look down, and he certainly did

observe that the road thereabouts was all in a gore of blood !”

“ All in a gore of blood !” This was the finishing stroke to the dreadful picture, the outlines of which had been already filled in. No wonder, that on hearing this last circumstance, the poor boy’s strength and resolution gave way, and that he sank down in a fainting-fit at Mrs. Faddy’s feet.

It was some minutes before he came to himself, and when he did, it was evident that he was about as able to walk home as to fly there. He reeled and tottered when he made the attempt, and was nearly fainting a second time.

Whatever were Sally Faddy’s faults she did not want for good-nature, and she was wise enough to see that the kindest act on her part would be to get Frank home as quick as possible.

Luckily at this moment she discerned the butcher’s cart approaching, and for some small remuneration induced the blue-frocked boy who drove it to carry her and her companion, whom she resolved to accompany, (partly out of compassion, and partly, perhaps, in the expectation of learning all details and particulars of the accident,) to the turnpike, where the road branched off in two directions, one towards the

market town, and the other to Mrs. Wood's farm.

They were soon in the cart, and the turnpike soon reached. As the gate-keeper helped Mrs. Faddy to get down, the following conversation took place.

"Thank you, thank you, John Hobson, I shall do well enough now ; so ; there, I'm not as active as I was forty years ago."

"Few of us are, Mrs. Faddy : none of us, I may say, unless it is Doctor Splint. To my mind he isn't a day older than he was when I was a boy. How he does tear about the country to be sure !"

"Aye, aye, John, but then he rides on matters of life and death. I dare say when he went up yonder," (shaking her head sadly, and pointing towards Mrs. Wood's house,) "he lost no time."

"I don't know for that, Ma'am," answered John, looking as Mrs. Faddy thought, more than ordinarily stupid and puzzled, "for I never saw him go that way : but about an hour ago he came galloping down the road like a madman, on that blood-mare of his, that'll be the death of him or somebody some of these days. Well, the gate was shut, and that's what my impatient

master never can abide. My stars ! but he very near rode over me ; ‘ get out of the way, you stupid, old, blundering, dawdling blockhead : what do you shut your gate for. There’s a sixpence, and be hanged to you ! I shall be late for dinner, you old fool, and there’s roast goose !’ And he dashed by, never waited for change, and was out of sight before I could call him back.”

“ What !” exclaimed Mrs. Faddy and Frank at the same moment, “ do you mean that he didn’t wait to go up to the farm ?”

“ Oh, my poor mother !” ejaculated Frank.

“ Oh what brutes men are,” ejaculated Mrs. Faddy, “ a roast goose one way, and she dying, it may be, the other, and he to go after the goose !”

John Hobson looked so very stupid at hearing these exclamations, so bewildered, so dumb-founded, that Mrs. Faddy saw it was hopeless to make further enquiries, and so they hurried on.

A few minutes brought them within sight of the farm, a few steps further brought them to the back door.

And there, sure enough, were dark red stains, in spite of the large quantity of water which had evidently been used to obliterate them. No doubt, the road had been all in a gore of blood.

Mrs. Faddy gave a groan. Frank rushed forward towards the door opening into the back yard, and through which the blood had flowed. Who shall describe the revulsion of feeling which he experienced when the first object on which his eyes rested, was a fat pig suspended by its hind legs, in the manner in which pigs, just killed and cleaned, are usually suspended, while on one side stood John Lees the cowman, and at a little distance was Mrs. Wood herself, very firm upon her legs, very well, very busy, and perfectly unconscious of the distress and sympathy she had occasioned.

Who shall adequately describe the joy of that meeting, or the mingled emotions which followed it? Deep was the thankfulness: and after a while, long and loud was the laughter when the origin of the dismal report was perceived. John Lees certainly had met deaf old Mrs. Fitchel as he was going to the doctor, the cow-doctor, and had told her that a cow of Mrs. Wood's had had her leg broke. This Mrs. Fitchel had turned into an announcement "as how Mrs. Wood had had her leg broke." The poor animal had gone too near the edge of a deep gravel pit; the side was undermined, and gave way with her, and sure enough the leg was broke, and the butcher

was obliged to make beef of her, but Mrs. Wood herself was as well as ever she was in her life.

A mistake had given rise to the report in the first instance: each person who had heard it had added some little exaggeration of his own, till it had grown up into the portentous tale which had filled Frank's mind with such dismal apprehensions.

All's well that ends well. And to Frank that day did end well, for it enabled him to realize to himself by his own bitter experience, the sinfulness of exaggeration, and the misery it may cause; and as he thought over the events of the day, he saw how his own sin had been the means of his punishment. If he had not been guilty of exaggeration with respect to Penson the pedlar, he would not have been afraid to meet him; he would not have run away instead of going straight home; he would have escaped the tidings which met him in the village, and the miserable hour that ensued.

However, it was a lesson which lasted Frank for his life, and whenever he felt disposed to retail, or "make the best of a good story," he remembered the broken-legged cow, and was silent.

Whether Mrs. Faddy was equally benefited by

the lesson, this history sayeth not. She was heard to sigh when she quitted the farm, and when she got home she was more than commonly cross with Martha about the odd four-pence.

RULES FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

PHYSICIANS make a great judgment of the health or sickness of a man by looking upon his tongue : so our words are certain signs for the quality of our souls. “By thy words,” saith our Saviour, “shalt thou be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

As bees manage nothing with their little mouths but honey, so shall thy tongue be always sweetened with God, and shall find no greater pleasure than to send through thy lips the praises and blessings of His name.

Always speak of God as of God, that is, reverently and devoutly.

Beware thou utter not an unseemly word ; for although it proceed not from thee with an ill intention, yet they that hear it may interpret it otherwise.

An evil word falling into a weak heart, spread-

eth itself like a drop of oil falling upon a piece of linen, and sometimes it so siezes upon the heart that it filleth it with a thousand unclean thoughts and immodest temptations.

Whosoever taketh unjustly from his neighbour his good name, is bound to make reparation.

Never discover thy neighbour's secret sins, nor aggravate those that are manifest: never make evil interpretation of his good works: never deny the goodness thou knowest to be in him, nor diminish it by word, for in all this thou shalt highly offend God.

Say not such an one is a drunkard, although thou hast seen him drunk, nor that he is an adulterer, though he has been taken in that sin, for one only act giveth not the name to a thing. Noah was once drunk, yet was he not a drunkard, nor St. Peter a blood-shedder, although he once shed blood, nor a blasphemer, although he once blasphemed.

Now although we must be extremely wary not to speak ill of our neighbour, yet must we take heed of a habit into which some do fall who to avoid slander commend and speak well of vice.

When thou hearest any detraction, make the accusation doubtful if thou canst do it justly; if not, excuse the intention of the party censured;

if that cannot be done, shew compassion towards his frailty, divert the discourse, remembering, and putting thy hearers in mind, that they who offend not, owe all the thanks of it to God ; recall the detractor to himself by some mild way, and speak some good of the party slandered if thou knowest any.

Never accustom thyself to lie wittingly, neither by way of excuse nor otherwise, remembering always that God is the God of truth.

If thou speak a falsehood unawares, correct it at the instant, either by some explication or reparation ; a sorry excuse hath much more force and grace than a lie.

FROM SALE'S 'DEVOUT LIFE.'

TOO OLD TO BE QUESTIONED.

DICK DODSON was now a man. He had no doubt of it himself, and was quite resolved that nobody else should have any. He was fourteen. He had left school. He was getting three shillings a week. He was as much a part of the mill-waggon as the horses themselves; and though some people called him the waggoner's boy, he reflected that he had seen men who were still called boys. Especially James Harris, who had as many wrinkles on his face as a shrivelled apple, and had a wife and six or seven children, was, nevertheless, a boy; he was post-boy at the Swan. Therefore Dick was not troubled at being still called a boy by thoughtless people, or by those who knew no better. Or, if a little troubled now and then, he comforted himself by pitying their want of observation, that he now always wore a frock-coat on Sundays; and

their ignorance, in not knowing that his old jacket had been transferred to his younger brother Sam.

Dick was a good lad in the main, but somewhat vain; very much afraid of being laughed at, and therefore always ready to do what he saw older lads doing, without stopping to enquire whether they were right or wrong. He was one of those who run a risk of getting into evil ways, not because he was naturally "ill-disposed," as it is called, but because he thought it a fine thing to imitate those who consider themselves to be manly, when in fact they are only bold in their sins. True manliness consists in fearing nothing but God, yet in fearing Him always, and in remembering that His eye is upon us at all times.

In most country villages there are some three or four lads, (louts is a better name for them!) who, for the time being, are the nuisance of the place. If mischief be done, they are the doers of it. If there is ever a scene of noise or confusion they are sure to be in the midst of it. You will generally find one or two of them hanging about the blacksmith's shop; or, if you hear a loud unmeaning laugh, or, I fear, an oath or curse as you approach the bridge, 'tis ten to one

but they proceed from some of them. The bridge is a favourite place with them; they can kill time there by dropping bits of stick into the water, and watching them as they float away with the current. In spring you may see them, hour after hour, throwing stones at the rooks' nests on the opposite side of the river. In summer evenings you would be sure to find them in the skittle ground; in winter nights, if the keeper is to be believed, they are learning to snare hares in the squire's plantations.

But how happens it that they have so much spare time on their hands? Simply, because they are so notoriously idle, that no farmer will employ them if he can help it, and because they would rather do any thing than "labour truly, and do their duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them."

These ill-behaved lads are a nuisance to quiet respectable people at all times. But Sunday is the day on which they usually contrive to be most actively offensive and disagreeable. However, the evil is one which brings its own remedy. Decent parishioners sooner or later lose patience, and then they find that the village constable and the nearest magistrate are more than a match for such troublesome offenders.

Such had been the case at Elmhurst. Joe Silver, and George Ashfield, and Fred. Butler had, to use a common expression, "made the place too hot to hold them," and so one of them listed for a soldier, another took himself off to some relations at a distance, and the third engaged himself on a neighbouring railroad. But the influence of their bad example remained behind them, and there were still two or three lads to be found who were idle and ill-behaved, who thought it clever to ridicule and laugh at things which they ought to have renounced, and manly not to be afraid to do things which they knew to be wrong.

I do not think that Dick Dodson began by wishing to make himself their companion, but he was afraid of their sneers and ridicule, and fancied that his old schoolfellows would look up to him and envy him if they saw he was a friend of Reuben Croft who was six feet high, and of Frank Birch who was the best skittle-player in the parish, now that Joe Silver had left it.

Accordingly on the first Sunday evening after he had left school, Dick was to be seen, not walking quietly down the church-walk with the children who were about to be catechised, or

the older persons who were desirous of gaining instruction by listening to the catechising, but forming one of a knot of lads who gathered themselves together in front of the almshouse, and made themselves conspicuous by their noisy laughter, and (where they were not afraid of consequences) by rude remarks on the passers by.

“Hilloa! old snail! where are you creeping to?” suddenly shouted Dick to a former school-fellow whom he detected passing quietly, and with an evident desire to escape observation, by the hedge side, in the direction of Church.

The snail gave no answer, but mended his pace.

“Come, come, Harry, don’t pretend you can’t hear; Harry Markham, I say,” (Harry turned round and stopped,) “Harry, you old snail, where are you going to?”

“Ha, ha,” cried Reuben Croft, “how you made him start, Dick! but why do you call him snail?”

“Because he’s so slow, to be sure,” replied Dick laughing; “what slow thing are you going to do next?”

“Slow and sure,” answered Harry Markham, good-humouredly. “Don’t you remember, my

fine fellow, who it was that beat, when the hare and the tortoise took to running races?"

"No, indeed, I don't remember any thing about any such nonsense. I've done with my learning, master Harry! When do you intend to have done with yours?"

"Never, I hope, Dick," answered Markham quietly.

"Ho, ho, ho, hear the old snail!" cried Frank Birch, springing forward, and trying by a sudden effort to force Harry's hat over his face; "ho, ho, drive the snail into his shell!"

No wonder Birch was dismayed at the thought of Markham's never-ending learning. He had himself been five years at school, and never mastered words of four letters. He hated the very sight of a book. However the snail was more than a match for him in activity as well as scholarship; Markham bounded out of the way of his descending hand, which then fell with no small force among the thorns of the quickset hedge, and suffered accordingly.

"Well done, snail!" now shouted Croft and Dodson, ready in a moment to turn the laugh against their own companion, whose sudden check made him look foolish enough. "Don't go, snail! stay and have a chat with us."

"Not now," answered Markham steadily.
"I shall be late as it is."

"Late! for what? Church don't begin for this half hour."

"I am going to the catechising."

"Sh! sh! sh!" cried all the three tormentors at once, clapping their hands, as if they were driving vermin out of a bush. "Ya! ya! snail, snail!"

"You don't really mean it Harry? you're not going to let the parson question you now you've left school?"

"Yes, I am," replied Markham sturdily.

"Why, what a fool you must be!"

"No; the folly would be if I did not."

"How so?" asked Dick, for he was rather staggered at his old schoolfellow's resolution, and his conscience was growing uneasy.

Markham, on the contrary, was one of those boys who, being naturally shy, and of a retiring disposition, try to do their duty unobserved, and without attracting observation; but who, when their motives and principles are attacked, stand forth and defend themselves, grow in boldness as the discussion waxes warmer, and cease to be plagued with the promptings of cowardice and false shame, because, being thoroughly in earnest,

they forget themselves, while battling for what they know to be right. Accordingly, Harry's answer was ready.

"You know, Dick, as well as I can tell you. We went together to thank Mr. Rose for our schooling, and he said the same thing to us both. He reminded us that in two years' time there would be a Confirmation, and he begged us not to lose what knowledge we have, but to keep it up and increase it, by going to the night school in winter and attending the Sunday catechising. He said we must'nt think we had no more to learn, but rather that now was the time to begin to improve ourselves. We had gone through the toil and drudgery of learning to read and write, and must now profit by it. And he said he hoped we should'nt lose sight of him, and get out of his way now we had left school."

"Lose sight of him? No fear of that I reckon!"

"No fear, but much risk," replied Harry firmly.

"And why *risk*? how am I likely to be the worse for not seeing him, and what is there to see in him, and what should he want to see me for? I'm sure he's not so fond of me."

"Whose fault is that?" enquired Harry,

looking his tormentor full in the face. Dick shrunk from his gaze, and turned his head away, blushing deeply. Harry took no notice, but went on. "You ask so many questions, Dick, that I am puzzled how to answer them: but I will take them one by one. The reason for which he wants to see you is, no doubt, the same as that for which he desires to see any of us,—namely, that he may have the opportunity of speaking to us, and doing us good. He often says that God's messengers have God's messages to deliver, and so they must contrive somehow or other to speak to all who are under their care. And that is just what you might have thought of yourself, Dick, when you asked what there was to see in him. We see in him one like ourselves in all respects save one, and that is that *he is God's messenger to us*. He has a message to us, as our Parish Priest, that none but he can deliver."

"And what message is that?" asked Dick.

"Why, that if we know what is right and do not do it, God will not hold us guiltless."

"One can't be always thinking of the parson and what he says," observed Dick, not very well knowing what else to say.

"Perhaps not," replied Harry, "tho' I do be-

lieve our parson is always thinking about us : but if we can't be always thinking of what he says to us; so much the more need is there that he should remind us of it from time to time. And that answers your other question, why we are likely to be the worse for not seeing him. We shall not be reminded of his words, and *so we shall forget them*. I am sure he means kindly by us. We have all seen *that* over and over again. And when we went to thank him for our schooling, he said as much, and that we should always find a friend in him, if we would make a friend of him, and go to him for instruction. So you see, Dick, I think I should be a fool if I didn't follow his advice."

"Which is as much as to say," muttered Dick, "that I am a fool. Well, lad, I don't know but what I am."

"You a fool," cried Croft, "no, you're one of us, and of course a good fellow! Don't stop chattering with that prig, he's more than half a parson already. Go along to your pulpit, doctor snail : and you come along with us, Dick."

Harry gladly turned his steps church-wards, while Dick, ill at ease, and thoroughly dissatisfied with himself, nevertheless joined his bad com-

panions, who, anxious to drown all thought, had discovered a new subject of amusement.

It so happened that a few yards from the spot where these young men were standing, there was a cottage in process of being re-thatched. The greater part of the straw which was to be used for that purpose was lying in a small pond by the road-side; but a dozen or two of sheaves had been left by the thatchers, on the evening before, in a very untidy heap, which partially blocked up the road; while a few of the sheaves had, in the course of the day, been separated from the rest by some boys, who had been playing among them; and these were now lying across the foot-path so as to compel those who are going to Church to quit the causeway, and thread their way among loose straw and litter in the road.

Nothing is more wonderful than the manner in which blind persons find their way along a road that is known to them: even in the crowded streets of a town, they will measure their distances so accurately, as never to miss a turning, or a crossing, or fail to find the shop they are seeking: but a change or alteration in their path, such as would perhaps be hardly noticed by those who have the gift of sight, will generally prove

a serious obstacle to them. If, as must usually be the case, the change is unexpected, it seems to bewilder them, to destroy their confidence, and to realize to them in a very distressing way the helplessness of their condition.

If any one in the parish knew their way to Elmhurst Church it was Peter Mills; blind as he was, he was always to be found on that track, whenever the sound of the bells reached his ear. I believe it would have been his greatest happiness, if, like Anna of old in the Temple, he might have lived there continually. He was a quiet, inoffensive, old man, but gaunt and withered, and, it must be confessed, sufficiently odd in his arrangement of his dress, to be not altogether unlike the object to which some of the thoughtless boys compared him, namely, an old scarecrow. And when he had to do with those who shewed no respect for his infirmity, he was somewhat cross and impatient; but in spite of some little eccentricities, he was a very humble-minded, resigned, and devout Christian, one who was always trying to learn his duty better, and to discharge it more scrupulously. As, however, he was very plain spoken, and had often warned Croft and Birch against idleness and Sabbath-breaking, he was no favourite of

theirs: and when they saw him coming down the lane towards them, they not only did not warn him of the obstacles in his path, but it was a matter of amusement to them to watch the poor old man getting deeper and deeper into difficulties. Not expecting that any thing would be lying across the road, he was simply guiding himself by keeping his stick in a line with the edge of the causeway, when his foot came in sudden contact with a sheaf of straw, which caused him to lose his balance, and he fell forward heavily. A shout of laughter was all the sympathy he got from the youths who were watching him. The unfeeling action irritated the old man, and, as he scrambled up hastily, his foot slipped, and he fell a second time, and his stick rolled away from him, and sank among the loose straw.

“Tumble up again, old boy,” shouted Reuben Croft. “Most haste, worst speed!”

“Poor fellow, he’ll never find his stick, if we don’t give it him,” cried Dick, moving towards him.

“Young man, I’ll trouble you to stay where you are, and not spoil sport,” said Croft, laying a strong hand on Dick’s collar.

Meanwhile, the blind man had got upon his

legs, but was wandering about among the sheaves in a puzzled undecided way, and every step he took was bringing him nearer the water.

“That’s right! straight forward,” cried Croft.

“No! no! too bad, too bad,” exclaimed Dick Dodson, extricating himself by a sudden effort from his companion’s grasp. “Stand still, master Mills, or you’ll be in the pond. Here, man,” he continued, “give me your hand, and I’ll lead you right.”

By this time he had made his way towards old Peter, in spite of the shouts of Croft and Birch, shouts not unmingled with oaths and curses.

“Who are you?” asked Peter Mills, sternly enough.

“Dick Dodson; and if you’ll give me your hand I’ll lead you safe.”

“Dick Dodson? Oh! the lad that keeps company with the louts, as folks call them! no, no; birds of a feather flock together! I’ll wait till some one comes by whom I can trust.”

“Indeed you may trust me,” answered Dick.

“Give me my stick, then, if you’re in earnest. That’s a friend that I *can* trust.”

“Nay, master, for that matter, it slipped away just as you wanted help, and I came to you. So I am the trustiest friend of the two. How-

ever, there's your stick ; come now, lean on me ; there, you are now against John Smith's gate."

The blind man felt for the well-known gate, recognised it, and his manner softened immediately.

" Well, well, I might have trusted you, I see ; but I could not tell but what you were as bad as the worst of them. What do you think will become of you, if a boy like you keep such company as that ? However, we have both had an escape, it seems. I from a wetting, and you from something worse."

" What's that, master ?" enquired Dick uneasily.

" A curse ; *the curse of God ;*" answered the old man sternly and sadly. " Cursed is he that maketh the blind to go out of his way."

Dick started back, greatly shocked : for he now saw all at once what he had not suspected before, namely, how completely he had fallen into a snare of the devil, and how Satan had led him on step by step, from one sin to another ; how vanity had led him into evil company, and evil company into boldness, and boldness into irreverence, and irreverence into Sabbath-breaking, and Sabbath-breaking into cruelty and other sins.

Dick was a thoughtless boy, but as yet not a

hardened and depraved one. His conscience had long since told him that he was doing wrong, but he had not seen the depth and extent of wrong. The blind man's words, however, seemed to bring all before him. They checked him in his downward course.

"I'm sure, master, I did not mean any harm. It was only a joke like. But I see now how wrong we were. I am sure I ask your pardon."

"My pardon is soon had," was the reply, "but how are you to get His, whose Day you are profaning?"

Dick hung down his head; and then, after a while, he said, "but it is'nt Church time yet. I meant to go to Church."

"We can profane the Lord's Day both out of Church, and in it: it is the day, the whole day, and not only a part of it that is to be kept holy."

"I had not thought of that," replied Dick.

"But you have been in the school, have you not?" enquired the old man. "You come of decent parents, do you not? You must know that it could not be right to keep company with those who are truly called the pests of the village."

"Whom do you call the pests of the village?" cried Croft, who had overheard the remark.

“I suppose, Dick, you are not going to leave us, for that old fellow?”

Dick's old fears of being laughed at came back, came back stronger than ever. Peter Mills said not a word to encourage him. He even took away the hand which had rested on Dick's shoulder; Dick was left to himself. No: he was not left to himself. A voice within him said, “You have been recalled once; if you go wrong now you may never have the opportunity of retracing your steps.”

Dick had been inclined to stop. That secret voice within him made him go forward on the road towards Church. It was the work of a moment; but on the way in which men act in such moments, their eternal destiny seems often to depend. The evil and the good are set before them. They make their choice for heaven or for hell. If Dick had then gone back to his bad companions, he might have gone on like them from bad to worse. But the blind man's word still rang in his ears, and as Reuben Croft called to him once more to come back, he summoned up courage to say, “no, I can't,” and hastened forward.

Peter Mills, blind as he was, was at his side in a moment. “God bless thee, lad, for that:

aye, and He will bless thee if thou keepest out of evil ways."

"I've done wrong, I know I have," was the reply, "and I can't expect Him to bless me, or help me either."

"No more can any of us, Dick. But He will help us, and does help us for all that," answered Peter. "But tell me, what made you consort with those bad lads?"

Dick was too ashamed to answer. "Well, well, you thought you must be a man before your time. Take my advice, and be a boy as long as you can. Better be a man in years, and a child in innocence, than a child in years and a man in sin. And that is what you were on the high road to. Where are you going to now?" added the old man abruptly. "It is not Church-time yet."

"I had not thought," replied Dick, hesitating.

"Why don't you go to the catechising?"

"I've left school."

"Left school! So have I, these sixty years, if school it could be called, that was only an old dame's teaching; but what then? Do you mean never to learn any thing more as long as you live? Why, lad, now that you've learned to

read and write, the worst and the hardest part of the work is over. Don't you know that if you don't make use of your talents, you will have your place at last with the unprofitable servant in outer darkness? And, talking of darkness, look at me! How can you tell that it may not be God's pleasure to make you some day or other, as dark as I am? I never had the opportunity of being much of a scholar, but I might have had more learning than I have, and of every bit that I lost I feel the want now. But I was a gay hand at learning by heart, and the Psalms and prayers I got when a boy, (I had a good mother, that I had! and, God reward her for it, she often kept me learning, when other lads were Sabbath-breaking,) the Psalms and prayers I learned then, oh! what I should do without them now, in my long weary days, and often sleepless nights, at times when time hangs heavy, and I have no eyes to read with, and no one to read to me? Take my advice, Dick, and learn while you can. And above all things learn all you can which the Church will teach you. You'll find the blessing of it by and by. There's not a child in the place that is as regular at the catechising as I am, and I have learned more from hearing

our parson question the children for half an hour before church, than I have from all the sermons I ever listened to. Now Dick, I've seen enough of you this day to make me think that there is good in you: but you've been going wrong, lad: and if you consort any more with such as Reuben Croft, you'll soon be good for nothing. Come along to the catechising, and take your place with Harry Markham, and the rest of the steady ones. I'll engage you'll never repent it."

Years have passed away since that Sunday; Peter Mills has long been in his grave, and Dick Dodson is a thriving man, and what is better, as good a man as any in Elmhurst.

Ask him what has made him what he is, and he will tell you that, under God, he owes it all to Blind Peter, and the catechising, and Harry Markham's example on that day.

MRS. MORTON'S WALK.

“MOTHER,” said little Alice Cook, running in from school, “Hannah White’s baby is dead, and she has sent to the school to say she wants four of us to come and carry the coffin, and so mistress says we may have a holiday, and we are to wear white aprons, and caps trimmed with white ribbon, and to walk through the long lane; I do hope it will not rain—and,” here Alice, having talked herself out of breath, stopped. Mrs. Cook was washing, but she took her hands out of the tub, and after wiping them, sat down to question her little daughter about the death of the baby. But Alice knew nothing more than that she was to have a holiday, from being chosen for her good conduct as a bearer of the coffin which was to take the poor baby to its last resting place on earth.

“Poor Hannah White,” said Mrs. Cook, “this is the second child she has lost; what trouble she

must be in ; I will go and see her as soon as I have finished my washing."

" But mother," said Alice, " there is my cap to trim, and my apron to iron."

" Why Alice," said her mother, " you seem to think that there is cause for joy, instead of sorrow ; I should not fancy you were about to go to a funeral. Suppose you were to lose your little brother, should you like to see Mary Curtis next door, thinking only of how smart she should be, while she was carrying his coffin ?"

" O mother, I would not lose my little brother for any thing, but I don't think Hannah White cared for her baby as we do for ours, for I heard old Nanny Roberts say, that she knew Hannah White would lose her baby, for she did not take proper care of it."

" Nanny Roberts is always ready to find fault with her neighbours," said Mrs. Cook, " and I am sure it is a cruel time to do so with poor Hannah White ; but I must make haste and finish my washing ; do you put on a flat iron, and then hang out your apron, it will soon dry in the sun. It is a hot day for washing, but all the better for drying the clothes when they are washed."

The apron was dried and ironed ; a yard of white ribbon bought at the village shop, and Mrs.

Cook, having dressed her little daughter and left the house in charge of Mrs. Curtis next door, went to the other end of the village to see the poor bereaved mother. When she reached Hannah White's door she heard voices within, which led her to stop. Mrs. Morton, the clergyman's wife, was endeavouring to console the mourner; "I do not," said she, "expect to see you wipe away all your tears, for I am a mother myself, and have known too well the pang of losing a baby, while it was hanging at the breast, but I would bid you to sorrow not as one without hope. Your child is taken from the evil to come, and is now rejoicing in paradise. You would not bring it back if God were to permit you, Hannah. You must think that it has been taken from you as a trial of your love and confidence in One who has said, 'suffer the little children to come to Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Had your child lived you would have perhaps found many difficulties in the way of leading him to Christ, but He has mercifully spared you the anxious trial by taking your child to Himself. Endeavour so to live, Hannah, that you may hope to join your dear little one in heaven. Do not think of it as dead and lost, but as living, and enjoying the pleasures which

are at God's right hand for evermore—pleasures to which you are permitted to look forward, if you so pass through this life as to be found when your time of trial is over, a good and faithful servant of your blessed Lord and Master.”

“Thank you, ma'am,” said Hannah, “for your comfortable words, and you have lost a baby yourself ma'am, and know how hard it is to bear; I don't want to repine against God, though He has taken two from me; I shall think of them, ma'am, as you tell me; they are now near their Saviour.”

“Yes, Hannah, and if it should ever please God to give you another child, I will come and see you a little oftener; perhaps I may be able to put you in the way of better managing the baby.”

“Thank you, ma'am,” said poor Hannah, with a fresh burst of grief; “loving my babies as I did, it is hard to hear the people say I did not take care of them. Old Nanny Roberts told my husband I was no more fit to be a mother than her grandchild, and Nicholas came home quite downhearted, and believes that the children died because I did not know how to take care of them.”

“It was very unkind of Nanny Roberts to tell your husband so, Hannah, and I am sorry that

he had not sense enough to see that the old woman only said so from the sad desire she has to make mischief. I dare say, when you entered on the married state that you were not at all aware of the many duties you had undertaken, besides cooking your husband's dinner and mending his stockings."

"No, ma'am, I was never much in the way of children, having no brothers nor sisters, and my mother never put me in the way of being either a wife or a mother. She was glad enough for me to be married out of her way, she said."

"I fear then, Hannah," said Mrs. Morton, "that you were not much missed as a daughter."

Hannah coloured, and said, "I don't think I was worse than other girls, ma'am."

"No, Hannah, that I dare say," said Mrs. Morton, "only it is pleasanter to be able to say that you were missed when you left your father's house to have one of your own, rather than that they were glad to get rid of you there. But I think I see one of your neighbours at the door, it is Mrs. Cook; I will gladly give place to her, Hannah, for she is a kind Christian woman, and will comfort you in your trouble, though it is one she has never known herself."

"No, ma'am, and it seems strange that Mrs.

Cook should be able to bring up a family of eight, and never lose one, and I should have mine just to come and stay only long enough to nearly break my heart with grief when they are taken away."

"Come, Hannah," said Mrs. Morton, as she saw the poor woman again give way to her sorrow, "think of what I said just now, you felt it a comfort then, and it is a consolation that will bear dwelling upon. That which God is pleased to give us is never failing. Pray to Him, Hannah, for fortitude to bear the trials He sends, it will not be denied to you."

Mrs. Morton went out of the cottage, and as she passed through the garden Mrs. Cook walked after her, and said, "It is no wonder, ma'am, that Hannah White has again lost her baby, poor thing; the first was taken from her by inflammation of the lungs. She said she would make her boy hardy, and there she might be seen washing it in all kind of draughts, standing about with it in the open doorway without a bit of wrapper on it. Sometimes the child would be bundled up in a hot cloak and knitted hood she had bought for Sunday wear, and then, when quite in a perspiration, off she would take every wrap, and undress the baby, stand with it in her arms,

while not a bit of any thing had it on but its little night-gown. She did this once too often, and the baby took cold and died; and I am sure it was enough to make one's heart ache to hear her grieving over the poor little thing lying cold in its coffin. She had not you then, ma'am, to talk so sweetly to her about its being taken to paradise. Well, this last baby she could not take care enough of, and I do believe, ma'am, that it has died almost for the want of fresh air; it was not so strong a baby as the first, and one day she sent word to me that her baby had had a fit and nearly frightened her to death. I went to her, and when I got here, there was she in that little bedroom, with a large wood fire, and the smoke coming down the chimney because there was no draught of air to send it up. The window was stopped up with paper, and the place was so hot that she was herself obliged to untie her cap, and unfasten her gown in front. The baby was lying panting upon her lap, its little face twitching, and its legs drawing up. She looked up in my face in such an anxious way that I could hardly bear to see her; 'What shall I do, Mrs. Cook?' 'Why,' said I, 'open the window and let out the smoke, and get in a little fresh air.' And as she knew I have had a large family she puts great faith in

me, and said, 'Do so, Mrs. Cook, but O, recollect what you told me about my last, that if I stood about with it in the draughts it would die, and so it did.' Poor young thing, it is a pity, ma'am, girls should marry so soon, they are mothers before they have done growing as children. Well I opened the window by little and little, the fresh air came in, and in about a quarter of an hour the baby lay quite still, and was in a sweet sleep. It got better of that, but now I believe the teething has killed it ; I say killed, ma'am, because I know that old Nanny Roberts fetched a bottle of soothing syrup, and would give the child constant doses whether it wanted it or not, and that stopped the bowel complaint which children often have when they are teething, and a mercy it is for them, keeping them cool, that is, when it does not last too long."

"Those quack medicines and cordials," said Mrs. Morton, "are very dangerous things in the hands of ignorant people."

"Yes, ma'am, and what was worse, when the doctor was sent for at last, for Nicholas White doted upon the child, and would have him sent for, old Nanny never told him that the child was asleep because she had given it a whole teaspoonful of the syrup, and when he heard that

it had been convulsed but had gone off to sleep, he said they were not to wake it on any account; it never woke but once more in this world, and then a dreadful fit came on and it died. Nicholas was very angry with the doctor, and I don't like to tell him that he had not got fair play."

"It is indeed very foolish, to say the least of it, to send for a doctor and then tell him only half of the complaint he is expected to cure, and conceal the remedies that have been vainly applied. Equally unwise is it to give but half his medicines, or endeavour in any way to cheat the doctor, as it is too often called. Another very blameable error is to frighten children with the doctor, so that when he happens to be called in to their aid instead of being looked on as a kind friend he frightens the poor little patient into a state of fever."

Mrs. Cook now went in to comfort her afflicted neighbour, and Mrs. Morton continued her friendly visits to the cottages.

She found that Jane Collet was moving from her old residence to another.

"I am sorry to see you giving up this pretty little cottage, Jane," said Mrs. Morton.

"Yes, ma'am, and I am very sorry to leave it,

but Walter says he is offered old Grant's house for a shilling a week less."

"Why that is the place where the typhus fever was so bad last year; old Grant lost his daughter and three of her children."

"Yes, ma'am, but Walter says the fever won't come there again."

"How does he know that Jane? the same large stagnant pond is still there."

"Yes ma'am, but farmer Willis is going to drain the pond, and then the foul smell will be gone."

"He promised to do that last summer," said Mrs. Morton, "I should advise you to stay where you are until the pond is drained. He must think the cottage unhealthy, or he would not offer to let it for so much less a week."

"You see, ma'am," said Jane, "that shilling saved will be a great thing for us."

"It is two pound twelve a year, Jane; I am glad to see that you take care of your wages, but at the end of the year, if you should find that your husband is lying in the churchyard from a fever caught in old Grant's house, you will then have no wages to take care of. Walter is far from being strong, as you well know."

"I have reason for knowing it I am sure, ma'am, for but for your kindness he would

never have got round, after that fever he had two years ago. But you see, ma'am, we have had fevers even here in our present house."

"Yes, Jane, but by the blessing of God you recovered from them; this you can scarcely expect to do if you go wilfully to live in bad air, when you might live in good. A month's illness would take away the two pound twelve from you, Jane, besides leaving you in debt to the doctor."

"Well, ma'am, I will speak to Walter, I am sure I don't want him to run any risk of fever, but the doctor says he is stronger than he has seen him for a long time, and, poor fellow, he will be so disappointed at not saving that shilling a week."

"He is a careful good husband," said Mrs. Morton, "and I must say he has met with a wife that he deserves, but I am sorry to see that I cannot convince you how much better it is to live in fresh pure air than close to a filthy stagnant pond. Pure air is of as much consequence as regular meals; you are always breathing it, and for young children it is especially desirable. For the sake of your baby, Jane, let me advise you to stay where you are."

But Jane said, that not only was the rent a shilling a week less, but that the garden ground

was much larger, so that they could keep their pig for next to nothing. So Jane and Walter went to live in old Grant's house, and having got well through one year wished much that Mrs. Morton would only call that they might tell her so. But Mrs. Morton did not feel herself obliged to run any risk by going in the way of the foul smell which arose from the pond. Farmer Willis had been too busy to clear it, and Jane and Walter had, they said, got used to the smell, and did not mind it, but Mrs. Morton, accustomed to the fine fresh air which a merciful God permitted her to enjoy, and which Walter and Jane might have equally shared in, never went into that part of the village.

A second season followed, and it was a very wet and unhealthy one. Scarlet fever broke out in the village, and the doctor had a long list of patients to attend to.

"I have," said he to Mrs. Morton, "been so fortunate as to carry nearly all my patients through this trying sickness. Walter Collet I have given over, he has no chance, and so I was obliged to tell his wife this morning, and poor thing, a more industrious creature than her husband never lived. 'You should,' said I to her, have stayed in your old quarters; in this parish

there is no need for any one to live in foul air unless he likes it. And if the man dies,' continued the doctor, 'I shall indict farmer Willis for that nuisance of his in the shape of a stagnant pond.'"

Walter Collet died, and was buried, and his wife had the mournful duty of expending upon his funeral the money they had saved up by changing from a healthy to an unhealthy residence.

We will now return to Mrs. Morton, who continued her walk through the parish, passing through the lanes and fields without fear of annoyance, for every one both loved and respected her. Mrs. Roach had not long been confined, so Mrs. Morton called to enquire for the mother and infant. Old Nanny Roberts, who made a point of always being present in every body's house where she could make any excuse to get in, was dandling the baby in the bright sun, and the poor little thing was winking and blinking its eyes like an owl in the daylight.

"That light is too strong, Nanny," said Mrs. Morton, "you will hurt the child's eyes."

"Dear me," muttered the old woman, "as if I did not know how to dandle a baby! Why I have nursed dozens, long before you were born."

Mrs. Morton would not take any notice of

this speech, impertinent as it was, but she turned to Roach, who was just coming in to his dinner, and said, "The reason why I spoke was, that if a child is exposed too suddenly to a bright light at so very tender an age, it causes squinting."

"Give me the baby," said Roach, who was very proud of this his first child; "did you not hear the lady tell you that such strong light was bad? I should not like my little Bob to squint. Bless his bright blue eyes," said the father, giving him so hearty a kiss that the baby, ignorant of the affectionate compliment, began to roar aloud. "Here, take him," said the frightened father, "I am sure I did not mean to hurt it."

A young girl took charge of the infant, old Nanny having gone away in a huff.

"Keep it lying down, my dear," said Mrs. Morton, "in your arms; never put so young a baby to sit up, however strong it may appear to be, for you may hurt the spine, and then the child will grow up crooked, or hump-backed. Until it is six months old at least a baby should not be allowed to sit up without some support, and as you are to be its nurse, I find, let me tell you, when it is old enough to attempt walking, never to hold it by one arm, or even by both arms, place a hand on each side of its little chest, and

never lift it by the arms; in such young children," said Mrs. Morton, "turning to Roach, who was listening very attentively," the sockets of the joints are so shallow that the bones are likely to slip out, before you are aware that you are doing the least mischief. Don't let a child walk too young, better let him crawl about; put him in the summer on that nice bit of grass that I see you have in your garden, with a shawl under him to roll about upon, he will be quite safe. In my nursery they roll and crawl about as they please, and the first time my little Charley walked, was when he rose up of his own accord, and carefully tottered after a ball that had got out of his reach."

"But," said Mrs. Morton, "I will call again and see your wife, for your dinner is ready;" and without waiting to see what the contents of the pot were, Mrs. Morton, who never pried into what did not concern her, took leave of Roach and went towards home. At the end of the lane she met two smart nurse-maids, one drawing a little carriage, and the other leading a fine little boy. In the carriage was a baby lying fast asleep on its back, with a white veil over its face, and the hot sun streaming down full upon it. As Mrs. Morton knew how wrong it was to expose

a child's eyes to such strong light, she told the young nurse "that the child would be much better at home asleep in its cot, than where it was."

The servant, who knew Mrs. Morton, said "that she never thought of hurting the child, that she was too fond of it."

"That I dare say you are, Elizabeth, but you are a young nurse, and I am sure will thank me for telling you that it is very wrong thus to place a sleeping child. In the very next field you will see that the infant under the hedge is better off, it is carefully guarded by the mother from the sunshine, under the shade of the hedge, and a shawl protects the head; not that it is a good thing to keep children's heads too warm, for the blood at their tender age naturally flows to the head." One more call was made by Mrs. Morton before she returned home; I have, thought she, been having quite a round of visits to babies this morning, so I will finish by calling on my newly married cook. Cook had married a widower with several children, and it is to be feared that she missed many of the comforts that she had left behind in Mrs. Morton's kitchen. She was surprised to find how much coals cost, and how fast butter went, when it was bought for her own cupboard. Cook had to make but

scanty wages feed a father and three children, who expected that her presence would have made a wonderful change for the better in their household. Instead of this there was another to maintain, and one who had been used to good eating and drinking all her life. Altogether Mr. Pratt made a mistake when he married a cook-maid who had lived nearly all her life in London, instead of a person accustomed to the country, and to the mode of life which cottagers lead. At first she went to cook dinners in the neighbourhood, in families who wanted extra help ; but when she had a prospect of becoming a mother, Mrs. Pratt was obliged to stay at home, and make what baby-clothes she could afford to buy. Mr. Pratt had been used to have babies come in his family faster than he could well provide for them, and was not so much pleased as his new wife, when she presented him with a fine little girl. This infant Mrs. Morton now wished to see, and she found it on the knee of the elder girl, who was feeding it, we might have said, cramming it, so fast were the spoonfulls of meat pushed into its mouth. In vain did the poor child turn away, it was proper that the whole saucer of food should be eaten, and every now and then Margaret stopped and patted it on the back, as if the food

required to be shaken that it might pack closer. As soon as the saucer was empty, Margaret instantly began dancing the baby up and down, till at length a fit of sickness relieved the overloaded stomach."

"You should not give the baby so much at a time, Margaret, it will make it sick," said Mrs. Morton.

"O ma'am, it is such a dear little thing, hardly ever cries, and old Nanny Roberts says that sickness is a sign of health!"

"Old Nanny Roberts is very much mistaken," said Mrs. Morton, "though it is a sign that the child has a very strong stomach, which she, for one, would soon injure. If the child was not sick it would be very ill. How should you like, Margaret, to be laid down on your back, and have spoonful after spoonful stuffed down your throat until you could hold no more, and then your father should come and toss you up and down from the ground to the ceiling?"

"O ma'am," said Margaret, laughing in spite of herself, "of course I should not like it at all; I am sure I should be sick too!"

"Well, recollect this, Margaret, when you feed baby again; give it but about three tea spoonfuls, and then let it rest, and go to sleep if it

likes, and I dare say it will like to do so. Now I never give my babies any thing but the breast for the first month. And not then, whenever they cry, because babies do not always cry from hunger. You will make a very kind little nurse, Margaret, I am sure, and take care to keep your baby warm, but in doing this don't wrap it up too much, and then uncover it in a hurry to shew your little treasure to any person who may stop you in your walk to look at it. This stops the perspiration, and then your baby may have a bowel complaint that will weaken it very much. You know how careful the hen is over her chickens, how warm she keeps them under her wings when night comes on ; but for her warmth they would die."

"I am sure," said Margaret, "I would not have this baby die for any thing, and besides, mother has been a great deal kinder to us all ever since it was born, and we ought to love it for that reason."

"You must love it, my dear, because it is your sister, and because it is a little helpless thing, sent perhaps to try your love and affection, by Him without whose fostering care we should all likewise perish."

This was the last cottage that Mrs. Morton

visited, and when she reached home she was tired with her long walk; but still she felt happy that she had endeavoured to do good to her poor neighbours, and had not been spending her time on her own selfish pleasures.

“SHUT OUT!”

TRAVELLING one summer through the north of England, I stopped to spend a Sunday in a retired village in Yorkshire. It was a beautiful summer's morning, and after a hasty breakfast, I rambled forth to enjoy the freshness of the early day. How beautifully soothing are the first hours of the Sabbath morning in the country—the repose of everything around—the toils of the week over—not only man and beast, but even inanimate creation seems to partake of, and to enjoy that rest, and all seems to point forward with longing hope, to the time when the working days of the world shall be ended, the strife of tongues shall cease, and the eternal Sabbath shall dawn on the new heavens, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

A short walk across the fields brought me to the church which stood embosomed among trees

in a vocal solitude. The churchyard, though small, was carefully kept; the grass was not allowed to grow rank and long; flowers had, in some few instances, been planted on the graves, and a hedge of evergreens surrounded it. The path that led to the church was neatly gravelled, and it was evident that no rude games were permitted there, and that none entered its hallowed precincts, without at least the outward reverence that was suited to so sacred a place.

On approaching the porch I saw a child leaning against it crying bitterly; but to my enquiries as to the cause of her tears, her only answer was, "I'm shut out,—shut out." The low and earnest hum of childish voices from within explained that the Sunday school was there assembled, but though I offered to unfasten the door for her, and take her in, she drew me back, exclaiming amid her sobs, "I've been very naughty, I mustn't go in there, they shut me out;" and then breaking away from me, she took the path which led to the village. I stood for a moment to see if she would return, and then, leaving the porch, I withdrew to the shade of a wide spreading yew and sat down to think. *Shut out!* The words rang in my ears, and I closed my eyes to all visible things, while I sought to enter into

the depth and bitterness of those two short words.

Is this indeed the house of God, the gate of heaven? Then may it well represent to me the city that hath foundations into which nothing that defileth can enter. And so it came to pass that in my silent solitude, I beheld in place of the old village church, a glorious temple, too glorious almost for me to look upon, too spacious for me to measure its extent. I could only see that the streets and aisles therein were of pure gold; that the floors were of spotless marble, and that precious stones gleamed on all sides; while strains of seraphic music, faint though the echoes were which reached me from afar, fell on my heart with such an overwhelming power, that I could well believe that at a nearer approach no man might hear and live. Dazzled by so much glory, I turned my head aside, and asked, For whom is all this prepared? And even as the question rose to my lips, I saw o'er hill and dale, through woodland and pasture, by the green lanes, and along the mountain streams, a multitude that none could number, thronging towards that temple of beauty and light. On they came, their white garments floating in the breeze; and gleaming through the trees that

they entered, some with calm grave look and reverent demeanour, as conscious of His presence whose temple they were approaching; preparing their hearts and solemnizing their thoughts, that they might be the better fitted to render to Him an acceptable service; some in busy talk, half whispering, half aloud; others more careless still, laughing loudly, and talking eagerly, discussing plans for amusement, and matters of worldly business. "Do these," I thought, "not see the stains upon their white robes? Are these not afraid of hearing those dreadful words, 'shut out?'" It seemed indeed not. They perhaps thought themselves good enough, and safe enough; "they mind their duty," they would have said, "they were going to church." Yes, their feet were going there: but were their hearts there too? Would a mere lip-service bring them the forgiveness of sins of which they were not conscious; a strength of which they felt no need; mercies of which they knew not the value?

Reader, can you take to your heart the lesson which these two words uttered by a little child had so forcibly impressed upon mine? Are you among the pure in heart who shall see God in His temple? You dare not say you are: you cannot look into your past life and say you are.

“SHUT OUT.”

The impure thoughts, the hasty sullen tempers, the angry and unholy words, the deceitful acts of years rise up before you, and will not let you number yourself among the pure in heart. But “blessed” also “are the mourners;” there is but one other character that may pass through the gates of pearl, and that is the penitent and contrite heart, mourning for sin, and washed in Jesus’ blood. Is this character then yours? If so, there will be, there can be, no irreverent mirth, no unchastened levity, no light or careless dealing with holy things; the heart that mourns for sin must be serious; the heart that seeks a daily washing at the cross of Christ must be a crucified heart, it may be happy, aye, deeply, immeasurable happy; but it must be earnest, solemn, fearful of sinning, turned towards heaven. Is this your heart? Oh! put not the question from you: seek out the stains that sin has made, that they may be cleansed away. Put away every cloud of sin that darkens and dims the brightness of the cross you wear; judge not yourself by others around you, or in the twilight of this world’s fashion or opinion; but see what you are; what you will be when the full light of heaven shall stream upon you from the great white throne of Judgment. Let it not then be that many from

“SHUT OUT.”

east and the west shall enter in and find a welcome, and you, a child of God's family, a member of His privileged Church, and signed with His cross,—you yourself be shut out.

JOHN HENRY PARKER, OXFORD AND LONDON.

THE PROMISED ESTATE.

CIRCUMSTANCES having obliged me to undertake a long, (and as my foreboding fears suggested,) wearisome journey on foot, I set off one November morning full of sad thoughts, which the sombre hue of decaying nature around me tended to deepen; and the country through which I had to pass, being flat and uninteresting, my mind was not diverted by surrounding objects from dwelling on its own gloomy meditations. Condemn me, wise reader, if you will; for indeed I was much to blame. I might have looked upwards and amused myself with watching the moving clouds, heavy though they were; I might have observed a gleam now and then which would have assured me that there was a sun behind them; I might have noticed the sociable little robin which ever and anon accom-

panied me in my path, and listened to its cheerful note, uttered, as it were, to give me encouragement on my journey. But no ; I was wrapped up in my own sad musings ; and towards the evening of that dark day, I hailed with greater delight than I can describe the form of a fellow-traveller, whom I overtook pursuing the same path, and who I found upon enquiry was journeying for some distance in the same direction as myself.

My newly-found companion was an old man, who had apparently reached the decreed boundary of human years, and in consideration of his age, I accosted him with the sympathizing remark : " Good father ! you must be weary and foot-sore from the length of road you have travelled to-day : for I know from sad experience that there is no halting-place or house of refreshment between the town from which this road leads and the spot we have both reached." Judge of my surprise when upon gaining a full view of his face, which I expected would betray the effects of extreme fatigue, weariness, and exhaustion, upon an almost worn-out frame, I encountered a glance so full of brightness and joyousness, that had it not been for the grey hairs, deep wrinkles, and stooping gait of the

possessor, I should have fancied as belonging to one who had numbered far fewer years, one whose life had been continued sunshine, who had known nought but the happiest, the most unclouded lot.

After eyeing me enquiringly but kindly for some moments, "My son," he replied, "what you say is true concerning the house of refreshment, but I have found many halting places by the way, pleasant spots where I could rest and enjoy the refreshments which the contents of my wallet afforded me. Many a stile and prostrate tree have served me as a comfortable resting-place; in truth, to judge from your countenance I should suppose you to be the more weary of the two."

I acknowledged that I should not be sorry to reach the small inn, which I imagined could not be far off, and in which I intended to seek shelter for the night. I then proceeded to utter many complaints of the dulness of the road, the gloominess of the weather, and the absence of everything that could reconcile me to so fatiguing a journey.

The old man gazed at me in silence, and I fancied an expression of pain shaded his countenance for a moment. "Murmur not, young

man," he said; "if the object of your journey is a virtuous one, disquiet not yourself with the dreariness of the road; remember 'there's a silver lining to every cloud,' and if but the region of your own heart is warm and bright, you need not be so entirely cast down by the desolate appearance of outward things." He then pursued the conversation in so cheerful a strain and withal with the admixture of so much wisdom in his discourse, that I became quite interested, I may say fascinated, and I felt assured that in spite of his homely garb, my venerable companion was one of no ordinary stamp, and I longed to ask him some question which might lead him to impart to me a portion of his history. Our short acquaintance hardly warranted my doing so, and we soon reached the little inn where we both took up our abode for the night, agreeing to pursue our journey together the following morning.

As soon as it was sufficiently light the next day we were astir, and upon issuing forth into the chill mist of that early November morning, how did my saddened heart again sink within me, and how did I, heedless of every thing that might have afforded me consolation, again thanklessly but secretly (for the old man's cheer-

fulness shamed me into silence) bemoan my unhappy lot. Forth he came with the same bright glance in his eye, the same calm kind smile on his face, freshened by the repose of the past night, and grateful for it too; for grasping his oaken staff, and suspending his replenished wallet from a button of his coat, (though, by the way, its contents consisted of no more luxurious fare than bread and cheese,) he began to sing Ken's morning hymn in a voice, tremulous indeed, but full of grateful feeling; and when he had concluded, he drew from his pocket a small Bible and Prayer-book, in which he read for some time, and then replacing them he turned to me and said, "You must not think me unsociable to-day, or that I am going to be a silent and studious companion; the practice which I have pursued for many years of beginning the occupations of the day by reading the Psalms and Lessons appointed by the Church, and thus, as it were, joining the Christian brotherhood in spirit when circumstances debar me from the privilege of bodily presence among them, I find so beneficial, so conducive to peace and edification, that it is grief to me when compelled to neglect it. Now I hope I shall be better company for you, and I should be indeed

glad if I could dispel from your countenance the sadness which, notwithstanding your night's rest, appears to remain there."

I answered by a deep sigh, and my venerable companion looking at me for a few moments with an expression in which lively sympathy was mingled with its calm brightness, began to converse in such a manner as to divert my attention to outward things, and to interest me in observing many objects, which, but for his happy manner of drawing my attention to them, would have been passed unheeded.

The fast falling and variously-tinted leaves, with the grey mossy trunks and branches of the trees, lighted by an occasional gleam of sunshine, possessed great beauty in his sight; and he made me admire them too. He seemed well acquainted with the history and habits of the birds which we saw, and discoursed upon the goodness and wisdom of Providence in providing food for them in every season and giving them instinct to seek it. He displayed so extensive a knowledge of natural history, that I was induced to ask him by what means he had been enabled to collect so interesting a store of information. He seemed quite willing to answer my question, and replied, that for many

years he had gained a livelihood by conveying from place to place, where the ordinary means of transmission were uncertain, letters and small parcels, the contents of which were of value. Many cross country roads had he traversed, and he had acquired the habit of observing every thing that crossed his path; and in his intervals of leisure he had obtained from books, which were readily lent him, (for he was well known,) information respecting those objects which had excited his curiosity. Every subject he touched upon was imbued with a healthy religious tone, which made his slightest remark appear of importance.

My desire to know something of his history increased every moment, and at length I ventured to say to him; "The enjoyment which you seem to derive from objects around you, induces me to hope that you have in a great degree been exempted from the too frequent lot of humanity, sorrow and suffering."

He did not seem able to reply to my remark for some time, and I felt sorry that I had given utterance to it; for a struggle appeared to be going on in the old man's mind, as if he was trying to repress some powerful feeling: however he gained the mastery over it at last, and said,

in a voice in which a slight tremulousness only was perceptible, "You judge hastily, young man: I fear my present happiness would not have been so graciously conferred upon me, if sorrow and suffering had not taught me the folly and sin of resting my best affections on earthly objects." Then piously uncovering his head, and raising his eyes to heaven, he reverently exclaimed, "O what great troubles and adversities hast Thou shewed me! And yet didst Thou turn and refresh me; yea, and broughtest me from the depth of the earth again!"

I walked on in silence; I repented having so deeply probed the old man's feelings; but he did not allow my self-reproach to continue long, and soon afterwards said, "If the knowledge of a part of the discipline which has been inflicted upon me will enable you to submit with more resignation to the sorrows and disappointments of life, I will relate to you one event in my history, which, awful as it was, yet proved the sanctified means of leading me to raise my hopes and affections upwards to that world, where all grief and sighing will cease, and where alone we can fix our hearts and fear no disappointment.

"I grieve to say that the years of my youth

and early manhood were passed in careless forgetfulness of God and heavenly things ; yet my worldly concerns prospered. I married, and in course of time became the happy father of two sweet boys. I doted on my wife and children, made idols of them and of my home, and ascribed all my success in life to my own perseverance and exertion. Alas ! I forgot Him who giveth to His creatures all things rightly to enjoy ; and He made me feel His hand and acknowledge His power.

“ I had been absent from home for a few days, and was returning late at night, picturing to myself, as I drew near the little town where I lived, the smiles with which my beloved wife would greet my return, and the sweet faces of my sleeping children ; when I saw a very unusual light, and heard unwonted sounds proceeding from the generally quiet town ; and quickening my footsteps, I perceived that the light and noise increased, until I felt too terribly assured that a part of the town was on fire. An undefined dread took possession of me ; nevertheless I hurried on, and reaching the fatal scene, what was my horror upon discovering that my own dwelling and three others were completely enveloped in flames. Words cannot describe the

feelings of that awful night. I believe I was like one mad. I called on my wife, my children; the crowd assembled around, but none could save them. I seized a ladder and attempted to enter one of the windows; but ere I could accomplish my purpose the floor fell with a crashing noise, and the smoke and flames poured out in volumes in my face; I fell backwards stunned and wounded in my fall, and knew nothing more until days afterwards, when I awoke to a full sense of my wretched condition, and found myself in the house of the good and benevolent clergyman of the place. With his own lips he gradually imparted to me the full extent of my bereavement. All in which I had placed my trust had perished. Wife, children, property, nothing was saved! Then ensued a long and wasting fever, and sorely must I have tried the Christian patience of that good man and all who tended me, by my utter want of submission.

“But I was permitted to recover, and during the long interval of weakness how would he sit by my side, pouring into my ear sweet words of admonition and comfort. Many were the holy prayers he uttered; and at length heaven was graciously pleased to send an answer to them. I joined with him in prayer, I

poured out a contrite confession, and from that time I had strength and calmness imparted, which before I knew not. Think not however that my reformation was speedily accomplished. It took years to root out the love of this world, and to implant earnest desires for the happiness of another life. Many a cross have I since had to bear, but I trust now all is well. The good clergyman remained my firm friend, teaching me how to derive spiritual advantage from every circumstance that befell me; exciting in me a love for the Holy Scriptures and daily ordinances of the Church, and lending me many good books. During the early days of my recovery he used to read to me, and one book in particular interested me so much, that if you have no objection, I will impart the contents of it to you."

I feared he would be exhausted by the effort of talking so much, but he assured me that it would not fatigue him, and he proceeded to relate the following legend :—

"Many, many years ago, there lived a powerful Chief. His possessions were unlimited, and extended over the most rich and beautiful country in the known world. His goodness equalled his wealth and power, and happy indeed

ought those vassals to have been over whom he ruled. The most fruitful estates were allotted to them to dwell upon ; every thing that could charm the eye and gratify the taste was there in abundance ; and their good master constantly endeavoured to promote their enjoyment and welfare.

“ Incredible as it may appear, and no less sad than incredible, these vassals grew discontented and rebelled. They plotted with an enemy of their Chief to rob him ; and upon their ingratitude and treachery being discovered, they were cast forth as wanderers and condemned to pay a heavy fine, the just punishment of their wickedness and folly. Wretched indeed was their lot ! Far, far they wandered from their happy home : the wilderness and forest were their resting-place. The enemy who had stirred them up to rebellion, forced them to work for him, and a hard bondage they were compelled to serve. Stripes and ill usage were the reward of their ceaseless toil ; famine and disease tortured them, wild beasts terrified them ; and they were without hope, for their punishment was to continue until the heavy fine was paid, and they had no means of raising the slightest portion of it.

“Years rolled by, and the same gloomy state of things continued, until the unhappy tribe were well nigh ready to perish. They looked upon their children and groaned. There was no hope, no help. But for their sin their offspring might have been free and joyous, living on the bounty of their kind Chief, without a care, without a sorrow; and now, they were slaves! Did I say there was no help? Oh! how undeserved was that which was preparing for them! The Heir of their injured Lord heard their mournful history; his sympathizing heart was touched with grief and pity. He pleaded for them; oh, could they but be delivered from thralldom and restored to favour, gladly would he bear their punishment, gladly would he pay the fine! He would leave his fair estates to visit them, teach them their duty, and bring them back to their allegiance.

“The terms are accepted. The self-devoted son quitted his Father’s glorious domains, sought the poor outcasts, and took up his abode amongst them. He toiled with and for them; solaced their griefs, provided for their wants, healed their sicknesses, and the great enemy quailed before him, and durst not so mightily oppress them. Deeply they deplored their past ingra-

titude to their bountiful Chief, and yearned for forgiveness; but the mercy that was in store for them it had never entered into their hearts to conceive. At length the fine, the heavy penalty is paid, and their Deliverer leaves them, and sends to them messengers to prepare them for their departure from the enemy's land, and to teach them what course to pursue in order to reach once more the promised estate.

“They were informed that the land they would inhabit was far more beautiful than any they had yet seen: it had been purchased for them at a great price by their Deliverer; but before they could be admitted to it, they must acquire some needful knowledge, and undergo a trial; and for this purpose they were to be conveyed by the messengers to an island, where every thing necessary would be prepared for them. With what eagerness did they listen to the words of the messengers! With what joyful hope did they hurry to the coast, and embark in the ships which their kind Friend had provided for them! After a few days' sailing, the shores of the island appeared in view, and, upon approaching it, they were informed that immediately upon landing they were to enter some pools of water which were by the shore; they

must not proceed one step upon the island but through these pools; such was their master's command.

“Now the waters contained in them possessed miraculous properties, when applied as their Deliverer had directed; and wonderful was it to see the mighty change wrought upon the rescued race when the messengers had plunged them in the healing waters and set their master's mark upon them. Their complexions which before had been sallow and unhealthy, now became clear and bright as in early youth; every spot of defilement was removed, the marks which the galling chains had left were obliterated, and an extraordinary strength was imparted to them. Even the little infants were made purer and whiter by the immersion, and their parents looked upon them with deeper love and gladness.

“The whole tribe were now clothed with new apparel, which their Deliverer had provided, and their old worn and soiled garments were utterly cast away. They all took a solemn vow to be faithful to their Chief, and to oppose and fight against his enemy whenever he should again tempt them from their allegiance. They were afterwards conducted into a spacious and goodly edifice, built of fair and costly stones.

Sumptuous were its decorations, rich its furniture and adornments, and an indescribable air of solemnity reigned throughout it. They were informed that this was especially their Master's house, where he would be present to listen to all their petitions, as he permitted them to make known all their wants to him. They would not see him, but he should always be within hearing, and keep them in his sight; and great need would they have of his help, for the enemy would follow them, (already was his ship seen approaching,) and would use every subtle and powerful art to deprive them of their promised possession, but his strength was greater than that of this wicked one, and he would impart that strength to them if only they would strive valiantly and depend upon him.

“The messengers next described to them the work they would have to perform; and this was the cultivation of certain flowers, the seeds of which had been sown in gardens allotted to them in another part of the island. These flowers were afterwards to be transplanted in their beautiful land, and there they would attain to a far greater state of perfection than they could ever reach in the island, as the climate would be more congenial to them; but much

might be done by careful culture here, and every pains was to be bestowed upon these plants. He who was the most assiduous in the work, and whose garden was in the most flourishing state, would receive the largest share of his master's commendation. But woe to the idlers, for the enemy would come and pluck up their plants and sow the seeds of noxious weeds in their place; and if when they were summoned from the island, all their beautiful flowers should have perished, and they had nothing to shew but bad and poisonous plants, alas! then they could not be conveyed to the happy estate, but to a region whose soil would suit the productions of their gardens, and where the enemy would torment them more than ever. They were all presented with books, containing full directions as to the culture and management of their flowers, and rules, plain, simple rules for their conduct under whatever circumstances might befall them. These books contained also sweet touching relations of their master's love and goodness towards them, of the pains and trials he underwent when he dwelt in the enemy's land for their sakes; and oh! the bright, glowing pictures which were therein given of their glorious promised land, were, one would

think, enough to make them forget all else, and strive and long constantly and earnestly for the attainment of it. They were directed to read these books whenever they could find leisure; to listen attentively to the reading of them when they attended their Master's house; and to seek an explanation from the messengers of any part which appeared obscure or difficult to understand. They were told that their kind master himself had written them for their guidance, and the more they loved him and sought his help, the more easy and delightful would the study be to them.

“And now these favoured ones were conducted to their different homes; and in these habitations a great diversity was perceptible. Some were placed in roomy and well-furnished dwellings, others in small cottages supplied with but few comforts. Some were also presented with purses full of money, while others had but the smallest supply granted them. But they could not complain; all alike was the free gift of their kind Chief, and they had no right to expect any thing. Besides they had but a short time to remain here, and so that they did but cultivate their flowers and resist the enemy, it signified little whether they were rich or poor; they

knew they should all be alike prosperous and happy when they were removed to their estate. Also when they began to study their master's books they found that the rich were only stewards who had money given them for the benefit of the rest, and if they did not so use it, the possession of it would do them more harm than good. So from this the poor took courage, and some were even thankful that they had not this responsibility laid upon them.

“We will now suppose many years to have elapsed, and the inhabitants of the island to have become quite accustomed to their employments, and to all the circumstances attending their sojourn in their present place of abode. You will no doubt picture them to yourself as making the prospect of their future inheritance the one great thought of their lives, the one subject of conversation, the bright goal to which all their endeavours tend; you will doubtless fancy them devoting all their time to the cultivation of their flowers, watching with eager anxiety for the opening of fresh blossoms, and studying with patient attention the books containing the instructions and advice so precious to them. You will think that the subject of the greatest interest to them, is the arrival of the boats sent

to convey them and their flowery treasures to the ships of their Chief; and which had already conveyed away some of their companions. Alas! that the reality should fall so far short of these expectations. I will select a few examples amongst them, and these will serve as specimens of the rest.

“But first, I must tell you the mournful truth that the enemy had established a firm footing in the island in spite of all the means, which, had they but been faithfully used, might have driven him back. Strange shops and warehouses had been established, containing articles for sale, which were utterly worthless to the expectants of the promised land; gorgeous and cumbersome garments, strange books, and useless furniture.

“Now what may appear incredible is, that some of the infatuated people spent their time and money in collecting stores of these things, and bestowed so much thought upon them that they forgot to attend to their gardens, which presented an unsightly and tangled mass of weeds. A hateful plant called ‘covetousness’ overran the beds, another called ‘pride,’ reared its head and bore some ugly red blossoms. ‘Display,’ too, a flaunting yellow flower scattered

its ill-favoured petals 'around, and amongst all these there was no room for the plants which had originally been put there to flourish; indeed, as there was no appearance of them, it is most likely that they had either been plucked up or were choked under so much rubbish. What rendered it so particularly vain and foolish to cumber themselves with many suits of apparel, and to pride themselves upon the gorgeousness of their dress, was, that they were not to take one of these fine things to their promised estate; one garment would be provided for them by their Deliverer, and in that alone would they be clothed when they arrived there. Their books told them that it would be of dazzling brightness and purity, and that they would need no other clothing.

“Another folly of these poor deluded ones was the manner in which they educated their children. Their master had commissioned his messengers to establish schools in the island, and those who were wise sent their children to them, and rejoiced to think that they were taught how to read and understand the precious books, and cultivate the flowers for their beautiful land; but other schools had sprung up, not bearing the mark of their Chief's son,

and where they were only taught many vain things.

“The garden of one of the youths who had attended these latter schools presented a sad mixture. There were the earlier flowers which had been planted in it, struggling for existence amongst foreign, poisonous, and ill-scented weeds. A sweet little plant called ‘diffidence’ was well-nigh hidden by the spreading leaves of a creeping plant called ‘flattery;’ and in this garden not a vestige of ‘humility’ could be discovered. Near this garden was one belonging to a poor man with a large family, who had neglected the advice of the messengers, slighted the books, and seldom or never went to his master’s house. Here the enemy had planted many prickly ‘worldly cares,’ whose leaves made such a rustling in the night, he could not sleep; a frightful black flower called ‘envy,’ and the very poisonous one of ‘discontent.’ This man had a sister, a poor woman, whose flower-bed presented a striking contrast to his own, and whose history was very touching. While single, no one was more assiduous in performing all that the messengers taught her. Every morning and evening, and at many other times did she seek the help and direction she

had been taught. Daily, when a bell sounded and summoned all his faithful ones, did she hasten with willing feet to her master's house, and whenever he provided a feast for them, which he often did, she was one of the most glad and grateful partakers of it, and greatly did she benefit thereby, for at this feast, very peculiar, and in their effects wonderful, viands were presented to the guests; for by them their wasted strength was recruited, their knowledge increased, and all their flowers renewed. In her garden the most beautiful flowers blossomed in perfection. 'Faith,' 'hope' and 'charity' mingled their lovely odours; 'modesty' with its blushing tints, and the drooping graceful buds of 'humility' blended their hues, and the sweet scent of a bright little flower called 'good-temper,' rendered her garden one of the most pleasing to contemplate. In course of time she married, and after that, sad to relate, she began to bestow less time and thought upon her plants. She became the mother of two pretty children, and began to take more pleasure in watching their winning ways than in thinking of the promised estate and in preparing for it; and the enemy took advantage of this, and during her prolonged absence he stole into her garden and

deposited there a noxious weed peculiarly hateful to the good master, and which bears the name of 'idolatry.' One of the messengers passing by her garden observed this, and his grief was unspeakable; he determined to seek her, and inform her of the treachery that had been exercised, and the next day called at her cottage. He found her plunged in the deepest sorrow, for that very morning her beloved husband had been summoned to the promised land, and a boat had conveyed him away from her. She wept and wrung her hands in despair at the separation, and the messenger found it vain to attempt to mention the subject with which his mind was filled, neither would she listen to comfort: but in a few days he called again, and then she was more tranquil, but very complaining. He read to her from the master's books, entreated her to reflect upon the happiness that doubtless was now the lot of her beloved husband in the fair land, and gently hinted that perhaps it was for her good that he had been taken from her.

This she could not at first understand, but when she learnt the whole truth, and how the enemy had taken advantage of her want of watchfulness, she then recollected how negligent

she had lately been, and bitterly reproached herself. She hurried to her garden and there in all its hideousness the baneful plant was flourishing and imbibing all the richness and moisture of the soil ; and the poor flowers already began to droop their heads. She now plainly saw and acknowledged her error, and how to exterminate the detested thing was her most anxious thought. The task was no easy one, for the roots had struck deep, but the kind master who heard of her distress himself helped her. He sent her some especial tools for the work, and some of the bitter water of ‘repentance,’ which loosened the soil.

“ But before her efforts were crowned with success, her youngest child, a tender infant, who but very recently had been plunged in the pools of water, (for all the new-born children were required to undergo this washing,) was summoned from her, and with tearful eyes, but a less murmuring heart, she saw her darling’s little boat dancing over the waves, and his hand clasping tight the sweet white flower, called ‘innocence,’ the only one which had had time to blossom in his garden ; then once more did she nerve herself for a vigorous effort, and plucking up the hateful intruder she flung it far from her, and shortly afterwards she had the comfort of finding the

beauteous lowly flower of 'submission' blooming in its place. This flower usually drooped its fair head, but when the sun shone upon it, it raised its pure petals and turned them towards his warm rays. And now her other sweet flowers having been watered by the kind messenger from the fountain of 'consolation,' again lifted their heads and flourished anew; and never more did she cease her vigilant care of them. She took great pains in teaching and encouraging her remaining child in the same happy work, and in his garden 'obedience,' 'diligence,' and 'filial love,' gladdened the eye of the beholder.

"Varied and beautiful was the appearance of many other gardens in which the lovely flowers had been carefully tended. But I have said enough to give you an idea of how the work was progressing, and it is now only necessary to describe the scenes presented by the sea-shore and the departure of the different boats.

"The summons which each received was in many cases quite unexpected; sometimes a previous warning was given, and it occasionally happened that those who appeared the most prepared to depart were left the longest on the island. The sea was covered with boats laden with their different freights, and many a

sad parting took place on the shore, for those who had been suddenly called away with no precious flowers to accompany them could have no bright prospect to look forward to, and too late did many mourn over their past neglect and folly, and sad indeed was it for those who remained, to part with them without any hope of a re-union.

“ But how calm, nay, how joyful were the other voyagers. Their boats lightly passed over the billows, and in the distance were seen the bright blue sails of their master’s ships waiting to receive them, and convey them to that blissful country, whose happiness they were wholly unable to imagine even in their dreams. Far, far away in the distance was a streak of azure sky, and that, they were informed, marked the situation of their happy land, where no more trial, no more sorrow or travail would dim their enjoyment, but all would be peace, abundant peace for ever !”

Upon the conclusion of the tale I thanked my kind companion most warmly for beguiling the tediousness of the road. It was with great regret that shortly afterwards I was compelled to bid him adieu, our roads leading in opposite direc-

tions ; and his parting words to me were, "Remember we are strangers and pilgrims, we seek a country. Be strong and of good courage."

But this was not the last time we met. I afterwards sought him out, and derived from his conversation lasting benefit. Many, many years have passed away since he "went down to his grave in peace." During that time, discipline has been doing its wholesome work upon me, and my early sorrow, which at the time pressed with so heavy a weight, seems but as a passing cloud. Praise to the supporting hand which has upheld and led me, I too can rejoice in the thought that "we are strangers and pilgrims," that "we seek a country;" and in the midst of worldly disappointment can take courage from the reflection, that "the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

THE PRODIGAL.

THERE is a common saying in the country round, that it “always rains on Carsington fair day,” and I certainly have often seen it so, but such sayings are not very conclusive after all, and there never was a finer day than the one on which our little story opens.

The town had been thronged from early morning; at mid-day you could scarcely make your way along the crowded streets, broad as they are; there were bright-faced country girls, and stout fine grown men, and here and there amongst the homelier dresses of the peasantry, you might see the bright uniforms of soldiers glancing for a moment in the sunshine and then lost in the moving mass around; from the numbers collected there, you might judge that the market-place was the centre of attraction. One large

show, on whose front were hung the paintings of lions, tigers, elephants, and all sorts of wild beasts, took up a great part of it ; another large portion was occupied by a booth, in front of which music was playing, and some very faded looking individuals in very bright dresses walked up and down, perpetually suggesting to the beholders the delights which awaited them within.

In spite of all the vice and folly which sadden the heart as it looks upon such scenes, there was much to please as well as depress. It was one day of pleasure to some whose daily lives were full of unbroken toil. You might see, as you looked on, friend meet friend, some apparently surprised at such unexpected joy, and it must have been a cold heart that could look on quite unsympathizingly on that gathering of happy faces over which the clear blue summer sky looked down without a cloud.

Thus the day wore on, and as the shadows lengthened, the crowd seemed to grow denser about the smoky flaming oil lamps of the booths which illumined the scene, their flames swaying hither and thither in the cool evening air.

And now let us leave this crowd a while, and go forth out of the town ; how still does the world of nature seem as we pass out of the

noise and glare of that crowded place ; what deep and solemn thoughts come over us of One whom we had forgotten there, and cannot but remember here ! We pass along a quiet lane, its hedge-rows standing full of summer flowers ; the hawthorn scent is heavy in the air, and the whole world seems silent and at rest.

Here is the house to which I have been leading you ; there can be no doubt what the person's business is who occupies it, the bright flowers, the rows of young shrubs, the glass frames and houses, tell us at once that he is a gardener. Let us enter through the wicket ; there he is, the tenant himself of this peaceful spot, old Ambrose Bertram ; he is closing a glass frame for the night, and now he stoops to set upright a large geranium in a pot which he had overturned in bending over the frame ; he moves languidly as though his heart were not in his work, scarcely caring to put back the earth which he had displaced, and to set the plant in its former situation ; and now he walks into his own dwelling, and closing the door behind him, sits down in his old arm chair and looks out into the evening.

It is a fair scene, that on which he gazes ; faint orange hues still linger, where the sun went

down, and surround the minster with its rich tall towers as with a glory; he has often and often marked this with a pleased and thankful heart; but there are times with all of us when old sights that have pleased us lose their charm over us; he does not even see that on which his eye is bent, but he hears the far sounds of the festivities of Carsington, and as the foot-passengers or crowded carts pass his house on their homeward way, he looks for one to come for whose return he is waiting; but the shadows deepen, and first one and then another star comes forth, and the minster towers grow dim, and at last Ambrose Bertram rises and closes the shutters of the window, lights his candle, and takes from his shelf what has been his comfort in many sorrows, his Bible and his Book of Common Prayer. He has read the evening Psalms and Lessons, but still the step for which he has been listening is not heard; he takes down another book, lately given to him by his clergyman, which he has already learned to love, he opens it, and begins to read from the spot where he last left off. The words ran thus :

“ Of the profit of adversity.

“ It is good that we sometimes have troubles

and crosses ; for they often make a man enter into himself, and consider that he is here in banishment, and ought not to place his trust in any worldly thing.

* * * * *

“ When a good man is afflicted, then he is weary of living longer, and wisheth that death would come that he might be dissolved and be with Christ. Then also he well perceiveth that perfect security and full peace cannot be had in this world.”—*Imitation of Christ*.

A sound outside on the pathway—the latch is lifted—the old man looks up eagerly—it is his son whom he awaited.

It was a tall handsome youth that entered, his features were not unlike those of the old man, their expression as different as you can conceive. One all calm and peace, the other wild and restless. The old man's eye was clear blue, and his complexion, though deepened in some places from exposure to the air, was fair.

Edward's eye on the other hand was dark, as his mother's had been, and his now disordered hair, (which was always somewhat long,) hung about his face, which although very like his father's, was bronzed all over, and flushed now

with unusual colour. He flung himself in silence on a chair.

The old man looked on him surprised, for Edward, though he had caused his father much anxiety, had never failed to brighten their home with his gay voice and cheerful smile, and had been always full of respect and consideration for others.

“Have you had a pleasant day?” the old man said at length.

“Yes, father,” he said in a hoarse and broken voice, “oh yes, very pleasant indeed.”

And he got up and walked about the room hurriedly. “What is the matter, Edward?” said the old man, “I would, my son, that you would give up such places if you return from them thus!”

There was a momentary flashing of the eye as if reproof would be resented, but the feeling seemed checked, and the young man sat down by the table, and took the “Prayer-book” in his hand; he opened it, but did not attempt to read it; after a moment or two he laid it down again. His father looked on him silently and sorrowfully.

It is a terrible thing to have somewhat to tell to another which we know will be the death-

blow to that other's earthly happiness ; the throat grows parched and dry, the voice fails, the heart beats so that we seem to hear it ; we cannot tell it, and yet it must be told.

In spite of all the wild and wayward ways in which Edward Bertram had grieved his good father, there was a deep affection for the old man which made it very terrible to say what he felt must now be said.

“ Father,” he began at length, “ I have often talked of leaving you, the time is come at last ; I”—the old man laid his hand upon the table for support, (though he was sitting,) it rested upon the Bible. There was a pause ; Edward could not proceed ; his father did not speak. “ Father,” at last went on the latter, “ I have enlisted.”

The old man did not speak, his eyes were fixed, and he remained for some moments rigid and unmoving on his chair.

Edward rose and touched his arm. “ Father, speak,” he said ; “ do speak, speak if it be but to curse me ; I have enlisted, and I go from you to-morrow ; we have often talked of my going forth into the world, now the time for it is come. I cannot stay here, indeed I cannot, I am wearied of this life ; you know that I am ; you shall have no more care and sorrow about me ; Sarah

will come and keep your house ; all be quiet and regular, as you like it ; speak, father ; you will not curse me ; you will bless me before I go."

Old Ambrose listened intently ; he heard every word ; as soon as he sufficiently recovered his consciousness, to think of remedies for this deep affliction, he proposed sacrificing all the little that he possessed to buy off his son ; the garden was not his own, and it was very little that he had, but he had friends, he would apply to them all, they would all exert themselves to help him that Edward might remain at home.

"No, father," said his son at length, "I thought when I first told you what I had done that I would have given the whole world to undo it again, but now it is not so ; I must go, you will be supported to endure it, I know that well, and I shall get on better away, I would not be bought off if I might now.

It was a sad night, Edward was to set off the next morning for B—, where part of the regiment in which he had enlisted was quartered ; it was a sad night, all the weary hours as they went by, and were told by the solemn tones of the minster clock, were full of fresh sorrow to the old man's heart, for he knew that each brought nearer than before the parting with his son.

Perhaps if it was to be, it was a mercy that it should be thus sudden; the anticipation of sorrow is so very bitter; the interval before the event was now so short, that it was impossible to realise at all, in its completeness, all its attendant misery; nor was that night all darkness to old Ambrose; late, very late the moon rose, and long before the dawning, the room was flooded with soft white light. Even so was it with the old man's heart; not only the confusion of hasty preparation which kept him up till very late, and the bewilderment of mind from the suddenness of the calamity, helped him to endure the trial, but when he knelt down beside his son, and they said their accustomed prayer for the last time together, and again when he knelt down beside his own bed, even then when no words of his own came to his relief, even then he felt that he was not forsaken; he knew that One was near whose ear was so delicate that it could hear even the incoherent words he uttered, and draw their true meaning from his very attitude of humiliation and strong efforts to bow his own will before the great will of the Holy One.

Edward, too, slept little; an unquiet conscience is a disturbing thing, and his had much cause

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to be disturbed ; month after month had he been withdrawing himself more and more from the holy influences of his childhood ; day by day had he been becoming a little more wild and wayward, more careless in his work, more eager about pleasure ; sins which had once startled him he had grown familiar with ; the good that remained in him was becoming less, the evil of his character deepening day by day. Remorse about himself, and sorrow about his father, prevented him sleeping for some time ; at last came the thought of the showy uniform and pleasant companionship that soon, he fancied, awaited him ; with these came dreams of advancement in the world ; he had strength, activity, good looks and good address ; who could say that he might not win his way ; at last towards morning in a bright dream of success he fell asleep, and would have slept on till very late in the day perhaps, had not his father wakened him.

Old Ambrose had passed an entirely sleepless night ; as soon as the morning broke he rose and dressed himself, and went to look once more upon his son ; there he lay, his dark hair flung back from his forehead, his eyes closed, and a smile still lingering about his lip ; it was the

form and face of early manhood on which the old man's eye rested, but the smile was the smile of infancy ; it was like the first which years ago his dead wife and he had seen break over his baby features in the deep sleep of childhood ; tears fell from his eyes, and he knelt down beside the bed, and the words came now at his desire, as he prayed for pardon and for guidance for this his erring son, and then he rose calm and strengthened ; the world might be a rough and bad world, and Edward a wanderer there, but there was One above all who might even now preserve him from the evil.

The hours wore on, and the young man still slept, and it was with difficulty that his father could at last prevail on himself to wake him ; he did so, and Edward sprang up, and was soon dressed ; the last prayer which perhaps they might ever say together was prayed, the last meal which perhaps they might ever eat together eaten.

The arrangements for his departure were completed, few words were spoken, the old man commenced something like an exhortation, but his voice grew broken and inaudible ; yet when the last moment came he recovered himself with a great effort, and pronounced distinctly the

blessing with which he sent his son forth, perhaps for ever, from the home of his childhood and his youth.

The sorrow of such partings is for those who remain behind ; old Ambrose only began to realize what had happened when he went back into his cottage and saw the scarcely tasted breakfast yet upon the table, the chair on which his son had sat, the cup which he had used, and the knife which he had handled. It is strange how in a great grief the eye will mark all the little things around connected with it ; two small bright mugs on the mantel piece, relics of Sarah's and Edward's childhood, kept old Ambrose's eye long and sadly fascinated. The woman who came during the day to perform the household work of his little cottage was full of amazement, and asked an infinity of questions ; at first he did not seem to hear them, but soon he rose and without answering her went into his garden and worked mechanically for a short time ; but it was in vain ; he could not continue at this long, so he went into the house and prepared himself for an expedition to Lady Courtenay's house where his daughter Sarah was in service. He scarcely noted the brightness of the day as he went along, and as he drew near Leigh court,

would have passed, without noting it, a low pony chaise in which were Lady Courtenay and her daughter, but the latter recognized him at once, and pointed him out to her mother, who stopped her carriage to speak to him.

Ambrose looked up and took off his hat respectfully. Lady Courtenay, who was a very kind person, and had known the old man for many years, soon drew from him the story of his grief, and telling him to proceed to her house, turned her pony's head and drove back towards Leigh court.

"Send Sarah Bertram to me," she said, when she alighted at her own door, to one of her servants.

Sarah was the head-housemaid, and had become much valued for her extreme steadiness and good conduct ever since she had been in Lady Courtenay's service, which she had entered very young.

Lady Courtenay informed her slightly of what she had just heard, and told her to let no consideration prevent her going home at once, for a while at all events, to comfort her father in the affliction which had come upon him.

And so it came about that on that day Sarah Bertram accompanied old Ambrose home, and

eventually took up her abode with him. And all was as Edward had predicted it would be, quiet and regular. Often have I looked upon the old man as he went up the gentle ascent to the minster, leaning on his daughter's arm ; or surprising them by a visit in the evening, found him leaning back in his vast arm chair listening while she read to him aloud from the Bible or some other holy book.

All was quiet and regular, and nothing could exceed his daughter's gentle care of him, and yet the old man failed visibly ; there was a hand withdrawn whose touch he had loved dearly, a voice which he dreamt of often, but never heard now. And Sarah felt this ; painfully at times she felt that she was not enough for him, and sometimes she thought that her father was scarcely so sensible of all she had done and forgone for him as he might have been.

For she had forgone very much for him since she had come home. There was one by whom she had been long beloved, who had been unable for long to propose that they should be united, lest he should only bring her to share poverty and sorrow ; he had worked hard that he might be able to maintain her and have something beforehand to start upon ; and now his labour had

prospered, and he had told her that the time was come for them to marry, the time for which they had both been looking long.

But Sarah had refused to hear of this at present ; she had many misgivings about her father's health, and she feared lest new ties might separate her from him, or at all events prevent her devoting so much time and care to him as she felt that he now required. The sacrifice was a great one, but it had been made ; before the altar in the sanctuary it had been made, and none but One knew what it had been to her. Old Ambrose knew not a word of all this ; most carefully had his daughter locked the secret of her trial within her own breast, and yet she sometimes felt vexed and disappointed that the old man did not display a sense of the sacrifice of which she had herself stipulated that he should be kept in ignorance.

But we must return to Edward ; he could not leave his home with dry eyes and a light heart ; it was the home of his childhood after all, and his old father, as I have said before, was very dear to him ; nor was he quite without recollection of a face bending with pale cheeks and earnest eyes over his own in the years gone by ; one night, he well recollected, (the memory ever

clung to him,) two or three hot tears that fell upon his face and woke him from his sleep; the time was connected with a day that childhood never forgets, the first that it sees and hears of death.

These and many sad memories came over him as he walked, but his feelings if they were acute were not lasting, and he was deeply sensible, as I suppose we all are, of the influence of what we call nature. Nor do I marvel at his forgetting much with the free air and blithe sunshine round him, and a path before him which seemed at all events to promise pleasure, perhaps even glory. He walked on for some time and at last drew near his destination.

He had passed the last mile-stone, and the city to which he was journeying lay stretched beneath his feet; the barracks were yet nearer to him, being on the outskirts of the town. And now he felt his heart sink within him—who has not felt doubting and depressed ere he entered for the first time on the chosen employment of his life? He sat down by the road side, he scarcely wished to proceed and plunge at once into this new untried life—how would his companions receive him? would they laugh at him for his country ways? those better principles which yet clung to him, would not they

expose him to the ridicule of the men amongst whom he was going? he felt that they must, and alas as he felt so he grew ashamed of the good which yet lingered about his character; he sat for some time brooding upon the change which a few minutes must make about him, shrinking from presenting himself amongst those whom he felt himself as yet to be very unlike in bearing, language, or any one particular. But there was no choice now; he might delay, but he could not alter what awaited him; so he soon rose, his bright visions overclouded, and a dark misgiving about his new life stealing over him which he had not entertained before. It was very hot, and he drew out his handkerchief to wipe away the moisture from his forehead; as he put it back, he felt for the first time that there was some heavy substance in the pocket of the jacket which he wore, and on taking it out discovered it to be a canvas bag, and he opened it and found that it was full of money. The sum was not very large, but to him it seemed so, and when he thought of his slender means who had placed it there, the value of the parting gift was not diminished. His first impulse was to return it and insist on his father's expending it in relieving the needs of his own advanced age, but then the thought came over

him that this might only pain the old man, and he could not but feel how useful it might prove to himself. Yes, he certainly ought to keep it—but one day he would restore it fourfold, and gladden his father more by bringing his own earnings and praying him to receive them, than he could possibly do by restoring this parting gift which he must have wished and intended him to keep.

His journey was soon over. The discomforts which he had anticipated he certainly had to meet with, but they lasted not long; Edward soon became very popular amongst his new associates, and as he was very quickly laughed out of whatever was contrary to their notions of right and wrong, the ordeal, which was a bitter one at first, was a very brief one. About the same time with himself, young Lord A. joined the regiment in which Edward Bertram enlisted, and from the latter's striking appearance he was at once selected for a servant by the young nobleman. This made a great difference in Edward's means, and yet it was certainly not to his advantage. Lord A. was a dissipated man, and therefore naturally enough a careless master, and Edward at a humble distance followed him in his extravagance and excesses; instead of saving money to transmit home, he was continually in difficulties, and at last was

compelled after much struggling to write to his father for assistance. What he asked for, was supplied to him, through Sarah's generous self-denial. But again and again he applied—he had grown reckless and hardened, he had ceased to care for others, he never once thought, as he ought to have done, in that sinful, thoughtless life, of the misery which he was entailing upon others by his own career of vicious self-indulgence. At last he made what he solemnly promised should be a last application of the kind. The regiment to which he belonged had been sometime since removed into the north of England, now it was ordered abroad, and Edward spoke wildly in his last appeal to his father and sister of the extreme unlikelihood of his ever thus troubling them again, or being to them, what he had still some shame in being, a burden and a reproach. The money was sent, and long months and years passed away, and Edward was heard of no more.

* * * * *

A change had come over the household to which I had lately such pleasure in introducing you; the garden had other occupiers, and old Ambrose and his daughter had removed to two miserable rooms in a crowded and wretched part of Carsington. The old man received a small pit-

tance of out-door relief, his daughter was still with him, working assiduously at her needle, by which, and the kindness of Lady Courtenay, she contrived to make a livelihood.

No longer was Ambrose Bertram able to frequent the public services of the Church ; he was generally now confined to his chair, sometimes to his bed ; and yet he murmured not ; he had more leisure than formerly, and so was able continually to be joining in spirit with the worship of the universal Church ; the clergyman made him very constant visits ; he was often enabled to receive the blessed sacrament, and was daily growing more submissive to a will which at first he found it difficult to resign himself to. Long did he cling to the hope that once more before he died he might see his son ; long had he prayed for this, and above all, if it might be, that he might see him a penitent. But more and more in this as in his other choices had that which at first had been faintly heard in a low undertone, “ Not my will, but Thine,” risen to increasing clearness, and now the earthly wish was the subdued note, and the spiritual submission the ruling one of his soul.

It was a summer evening once more, and years had passed away and many things had changed ;

old age and death had been busy in the neighbourhood that year, but old Ambrose was still spared. Now this evening deep orange hues were gathered round the sunset, and the air was hushed; the old man looked forth from his window, but oh how different the scene from what we first saw him gazing upon; even the dirty court however looked bright in that rich light that was flooding the wide earth, and a small space of sky might be seen above of pale clear blue, shewing how over all places, the most unsightly, ever bends continually the same Almighty love. His daughter had gone out to purchase some materials for her work, and the old man sat alone, his hands clasped, his eyes lifted upward to the sky. 'The door below opened, and he heard a voice enquiring for himself which made him tremble exceedingly—a step was on the stair—the latch of the room door was lifted, and on the threshold stood his son! None but a father's love would have recognised him, the face was haggard and pale, the mouth hidden by a deep moustache, the figure bent as by illness, the brilliant uniform which he wore only making his appearance look more wretched than it was. He did not speak. Was it but a vision made up of many a day dream, or was it the ghost of his lost son? No, it was Edward the

long-lost found, he was kneeling at his feet, he was resting his brow upon his knees, and in a broken tone he began, "Father!" he could not proceed, the old man's tear of joy mingled with the young one's tear of penitence. "My son," murmured the old man, "my dearest, my best beloved! Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." There were two persons in the room who were now witnesses of the scene; their entrance had been unheard, but there they stood, Sarah and Mr. Bernard the clergyman, whom she had met with at the door about to pay them a visit.

"Oh Sir," said the old man looking up, "rejoice with me, he is come back, he is come home. Sarah, thy brother is returned!"

But Sarah uttered no word of welcome, she tried to do so, but in vain, her throat was dry, her heart was full, she burst into tears and sat down. The old man was surprised and shocked. "Sarah," he said, "hast thou no word of welcome for thy brother?" still she could not speak, all the wrong feelings which she had not learned to restrain were breaking forth, she could not speak. Edward looked at her in silence. Mr. Bernard approached her, "Sarah," he said in a low voice, "is it possible that you do not rejoice at your

brother's return?" "I have never been loved as he is loved now," she said passionately at last, and she rose and left the room, and in her own chamber she brooded long with bitter tears on her own love which had been flung back upon herself, upon her self-denials and services which had never been appreciated. Long did she sit thus alone with these thoughts upon her; they were broken at last by her father's voice calling her from the other room; when she entered he looked sorrowfully at her; Edward was beside him; "Sarah," said old Ambrose, as she drew nigh, "it is not that I love Edward more than thee, but that he needs my love most now," and then Edward rose and prayed her forgiveness for all the wrong that he had done her by his thoughtless, wicked ways, and the spell was broken, and they all rejoiced together in the penitent's return.

That night Edward told to them his history. He had suffered much, he had known hardships and sickness in a foreign land, and more than once death had seemed close beside him. But his sufferings had been blessed to him; in the midst of their darkness there had sprung up to him a light, and he had grace to follow it; in a far land there had come to him a thought of his home, his true home, and now his feet had borne him hither.

His son's return seemed to give the old man new strength : so far did he recover that he was able to be taken to the minster, and there with his son and daughter beside him to partake of the holy communion ; but the strength was brief which he received ; a stroke hung over him which might not be averted ; most gently however did it fall ; Edward and Sarah watching by his bed, he was taken to his rest.

Beneath the shadow of the minster towers there lies a simple cross of stone that marks the old man's grave. Sarah is settled happily at Carsington, and lives there much respected. Edward still pursues the life which he chose, but is a very different man from what he was when he first entered it ; he is still cheerful, still looked up to, and is advancing steadily, much esteemed by his superior officers, and popular amongst his associates. But words he once uttered he now shrinks from, works he once did, he does not now so much as speak of, his absences from duty are spent at Carsington, where I have more than once seen him, in company with his sister, standing with wet eyes beside his father's grave.

HANNAH DEAN, OR A DAUGHTER'S TRIAL.

POOR Hannah Dean! much did she need all kindly pity, for her lot was hard, and few were the earthly helps which she had received to assist her in bearing up against it.

She lived with her father in a little cottage in a lonely part of the village of Stourton, and although she was but a child, her father, James Dean, expected her to wait upon him at all times, and also to do the whole work of the house, and the washing of their clothes, and to go upon errands.

Hannah's father had been a soldier, but having been disabled, was obliged to leave the service, and live on his pension. Her mother had died when she was about twelve years of age.

The Deans were very ignorant as far as school learning goes. They could neither read nor write, and did not care to have their child in-

structed in these things. But Hannah had been taught by her mother the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and these being carefully committed to memory, were a good foundation ; yet it would have rendered her childhood happier, had she been able to read the Holy Scripture, and draw instruction from thence.

James Dean would neither go to Church, nor suffer his child to go, and Hannah was unable to go contrary to her father's command, though she longed to enter God's House. As I have before said, she was much to be pitied ; for, added to her father's disregard of religion, he was stern and passionate, and in very many instances quite regardless of her comfort. In his own person he was very untidy ; and poor Hannah, from lack of means, was often but barely clad. When she went into the village upon errands, such as to buy their bread, and butter, and other necessary things, it sometimes made her unhappy when she saw children about her own age neatly dressed, and on their way to school. And one day as she was returning to her home she cried bitterly, but before she quite reached the cottage she set the burden which she was carrying upon the ground, and taking up the

corner of her pinafore wiped her eyes, hoping by so doing to remove all trace of weeping from her face. But her tears which had fallen had been too scalding to leave no mark behind ; and so when she reached the garden gate, her father, who was standing by it, observed her, and asked in a stern and angry tone what she had been blubbering about.

Hannah possessed many estimable virtues,—a love of truth not the least. This principle had been instilled into her by her father, who often said he hated hypocrisy and would have nothing to do with liars.

The poor girl stood silent for a minute, dreading to answer her father's question. "Are you making up a story in your mind to tell me?" said he, "If ever I was to catch you putting me off with a lie I would beat you soundly for it, and that you know ; so tell me at once," continued he, raising his voice until Hannah shuddered, "and let me hear the whole truth." The child answered, "I saw so many little girls, father, about as big as I, and all of them had got such tidy clothes on, and such stout shoes, and I thought I looked so ragged, and some of them stared so hard at me ; and they were all just going to school, and I wished that I could be

like them, and when I thought about it it made me cry, but it is all over now, father, and I won't cry again if I can help it."

"No, you had better not," said he, "or it will be the worse for you. What! you would envy, would you! not if you live with me, I'll tell you that. I'll have no envy here, so set about your work and look good-tempered, or you shall not stay here, for I will turn you out to beg your bread, and will live here by myself."

This threat of turning her out of doors had been often made to Hannah by her father, and she greatly feared that some day he would put it into execution, although she strove by every means in her power to please him in all things.

The last parting piece of advice which had been given to her by her mother, was to mind when she was in affliction and go as soon as she could up to her own little bed-room, and having shut the door, there kneel down and say the Lord's Prayer, and doubtless the Lord would give her relief. This Hannah did not fail to do whenever she felt her trials to be more than commonly oppressive.

James Dean seemed determined to have no personal friend, neither would he allow his child to have one. "I will not have you go gossiping about,"

he repeatedly said to Hannah, to check her from forming an intimate acquaintance with any one. Before her mother's death, she had been a happy, merry child, and although not allowed to go to school, yet she had never lacked companions, for her father did not then think of what became of her, and so she had often gone into the village and played with other children, and had been the foremost among them for fun and frolic. But death often makes sad changes in a household, and this Hannah felt when from a light-hearted, careless child, she was suddenly called upon by her father to change herself into the thoughtful mistress of his house, and there to toil and labour, far beyond her strength, without a single word of encouragement for all her good endeavours. This was to her "adversity," and by the grace of God, which in His mercy He gave her in answer to her prayer, it worked that good within her for which doubtless it was sent,—it taught her to "consider." Although the Bible was to Hannah a "sealed book," yet as night after night, and morning after morning, according to her mother's instructions, she first knelt and said the Lord's Prayer, and then stood up and said the Apostles' Creed, which she had been taught to call her "Belief," the great mercy

of our Redeemer began to dawn upon her soul, and she was led to meditate upon that article of the Christian faith, the Life Everlasting, in which she professed to believe. Very earnestly did she try to call to mind all that her mother had said to her about Heaven, and the mansions there that the Saviour of the world is preparing for His faithful servants: and then these words of her mother's seemed to echo loudly within her heart, "Love the Lord, Hannah, with all your might, and He will take you to Himself in His good time:" and the child felt herself to be but a pilgrim upon the earth, and looked forwards to a better inheritance.

When children in dutiful obedience to their parents kneel down before the throne of grace and call the Almighty God their "Father," and pray that His kingdom may come, and His "will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we may be sure that a blessing is sent in answer to their petitions, although they cannot comprehend the full meaning of the words they say.

Even to the advanced Christian, (when he has attained the age at which his powers are at their highest,) these words, "Thy Kingdom," "Thy will," when said by him to his heavenly Father, contain a depth of meaning which his

mind is unable to fathom. No other who has ever dwelt upon this earth, but He who framed the prayer for us, could compass the vast extent of the "Kingdom of Heaven" and the "will of God;" therefore in all humility let mortal man bow his reason before infinite wisdom, and let him not deride the child who prays for greater blessings than as yet have been revealed to him.

"Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me," is the command of Jesus Christ Himself, and how can children approach Him better than with His own words upon their lips?

Where but in holy Baptism had Hannah Dean received that heavenly grace which made her lift her heart in faith, and bow her knees in token of humility, while she prayed to God each night and morning? "We receive," says the learned Hooker, "Christ Jesus in Baptism once, as the first beginner; in the Eucharist often, as being by continual degrees the finisher of our life."

When Hannah Dean, in her infancy, was taken to the parish Church to be baptized, that Holy Sacrament was administered, as it was then customary at Stourton, after the last lesson at evening prayer; and many good Christians among the congregation present on that day considered

it a privilege to be allowed to join with the minister in praying that the Lord would multiply His blessings upon the child who was presented at the font. Certainly God lent a willing ear to the petitions then offered up in Hannah Dean's behalf. Can we suppose that He would be deaf when Christians besought Him in such words as these? "We beseech Thee for Thine infinite mercies, that Thou wilt mercifully look upon this child; wash her and sanctify her with the Holy Ghost, that she being delivered from Thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ's Church; and being stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally she may come to the land of everlasting life; there to reign with Thee, world without end, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Surely her name was then entered in the "Book of life," (the hand-writing which was against her for the original sin of her nature having been blotted out,) and a ministering angel appointed to watch the little Christian for her good.

To live alone with a parent and meet with harshness from him instead of kindness, and not to be allowed the blessing of a friend to whom to tell one's grief, and beside all this, to be obliged

to work hard with barely enough food to satisfy the cravings of hunger, nor enough clothes to give a decent appearance to the person, this truly is adversity, and Hannah thought that it was the very worst that could happen to her. But we never know when our cup of sorrow is quite full. Another drop may still be added bringing a fresh grief to the troubled soul. And so it was with Hannah Dean. She was seized with an attack of sickness, which brought down her strength and made her feel so wholly unfit to toil, that she dreaded the early hour of morning to come when she was obliged to get up from her bed, and with an aching head set about her daily work.

Her father did not watch with a loving eye her sudden decline of health, and when she sat shivering near the fire from the effect of the aguish disease, he thought it was only a fit of idleness, and scolded her, and desired her to be more brisk, and lively.

Those who have not made God their hope, and who do not see and acknowledge His mercy in all things, perhaps may wonder at His permitting this further affliction to fall upon one already under so severe a trial. But we know that "all things work together for good to them that love

God." And so they did for Hannah Dean, for she loved God, and endeavoured to run the way of His commandments, fulfilling the duties of her humble station, to the best of her ability, and truly honouring and loving her father even while he ill treated her.

"Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," says the Psalmist. These words were fully realized by Hannah, upon whom the day of prosperity began to dawn, when the clouds above her seemed even darker than before.

One day she felt very ill indeed, and cold chills came over her, making her shake like an aspen leaf. So she collected a few sticks, and having made a tiny blaze with them upon the hearth, she drew her chair quite close to the fire, and spreading her thin hands before it, tried to get a little warmth into her body. It was about their usual time of going to bed, and when her father came in from the garden, he looked sternly at her for making such a waste as he thought of their firing. "Is it not enough," said he, "to have a fire twice in these summer days, without wanting one a third time, just to make you warm before you go to bed? A pretty pass 'tis come to now, but I won't have it," and so saying, he

kicked the fire out with his foot and bade Hannah go to bed that minute.

“Father,” said she, “I am so very, very cold, and when I am in bed my body shakes, and my teeth chatter, and oftentimes I cannot sleep; and then when morning comes I feel so tired. Oh father! please to have pity on me, for I feel quite ill, indeed I do.”

“Don’t answer me,” said the unkind father, who had hardened his heart against all gentle feelings. Poor Hannah shrunk from his side, and hastened to her little chamber, and there, having undressed herself, knelt down and began to say her evening prayer, which, as I have before said, consisted of the Lord’s Prayer. When this was said, she continued kneeling, for her knees seemed rooted to the floor, and then she opened all her heart to God, she told Him all her sorrows, she prayed that He would make her father love her, and enable her to please him better. And then she begged that God would have pity upon her, and make her well in health, so that she might do her work without getting so very tired. Upon rising from her knees, she said aloud the Belief, and then laid down on her bed with a peaceful bosom, and that night her sleep was sweet, for the Lord gave her the blessing of rest.

Here we see another of the sweet "uses of adversity," Hannah Dean had been taught through it to pray more heartily, and to look to her Friend in Heaven, and seek earnestly for His help in the hour of need.

When morning came she awoke with a different feeling to any that she had ever enjoyed before. While she was still in bed she could not help thanking God for His goodness in giving her so sweet a sleep. Thus adversity had done more than cause her to "consider," and to pray; it had taught her also to be thankful, and when she was saying her prayers that morning she felt that the Lord was very near, so again she told at His throne of grace, all her desires, and reverently entrusted herself to His Almighty care.

Upon going down stairs she found her father busily engaged in doing her work. He had lighted the fire, and put on the kettle, and was in the act of placing the breakfast cloth upon the table. Hannah started at witnessing this unusual sight, but was soon re-assured by her father giving her a kiss and saying to her with kindness, "Good morning, child."

And what had been the cause of this change of conduct in James Dean? Penitence and prayer, brought about by his listening attentively

to the repetition of the Articles of the Christian Faith. •

James Dean had, on the over-night, seated himself moodily in his chair after repulsing his child and sending her to her room with such unnatural harshness ; and all was silence in the cottage until Hannah's voice was heard saying aloud, as was her custom, the Belief. Every word was heard distinctly by the father, who repeated after his child the concluding articles, "the Forgiveness of sins, the Resurrection of the body, and the Life everlasting."

An awful consciousness of his own depraved course of life struck James Dean while he said those words, and he felt that if he should die in his present state his eternal portion would be condemnation and woe, not forgiveness and everlasting joy.

And then thoughts crossed his mind of the days of his childhood, when his parents had taken great pains in teaching him to believe and pray, and he contrasted those happy days with his present gloomy ones, and bitterly deplored the loss which he had undergone. And he thought too of the kind attention which his father and mother had always shewn to his personal wants, and here again made a contrast in his

mind between his own youthful days, and those of his hard-working child, and he could not but blame himself for having conducted himself towards Hannah with such selfishness and severity.

James Dean sat for some time in this relenting mood, and then he quietly walked up stairs, and kneeling down by his bedside prayed to God.

Before undressing himself, he softly opened the door of Hannah's bed-room, intending to speak a kind word to her if he found her awake. But she was sleeping calmly, and her emaciated face told to the father that the sickness of which she had complained was not exaggerated. Several times during that night, when lying sleepless, he thought of poor Hannah's faded looks, and of her unrepining submission, and he determined for the future to be to her a loving parent.

"It has a bad look with it," said he, as he finished placing the breakfast things upon the table after giving Hannah the kiss which had so astonished her, "it does not look well for a father to feel himself obliged to ask his child to forgive him; but I am brought to that, for I have been a cruel father to you, Hannah. Do you think you can forgive me from the bottom of your heart, and let the past be forgotten?"

“Yes, father,” said Hannah timidly, “I am sure I can.”

“Well then,” said the father, “we will say no more about it.”

During breakfast little was said; but James Dean observed that his child had no appetite for her food, and that she looked indeed in a very sickly state.

“Hannah,” said he, when he had finished his meal and left the table, “I am going out for an hour or two, and you may make up a bonny fire and keep yourself warm till I come back.” He then put on his hat and left the house, but little did Hannah suspect that he was going to the neighbouring town to fetch a doctor for her; yet such was the fact; for in the course of a few hours a doctor arrived who said he could soon restore her to health if she had proper care and attention. The harsh father now became transformed into the gentle nurse, and watched over his child with tenderness; and Hannah's eyes often over-flowed with tears of joy and gratitude at the many tokens of affection which she received from him. Her health was not restored so quickly as the doctor thought for, but even this worked a good effect upon the father, for while he had to wait upon his child his mind

was freed from selfish thoughts, and his heart was softened by the fear of altogether losing his little meek companion, who at times suffered so severely from the return of the ague fits that her recovery seemed doubtful.

But she did at length recover, and I am happy to say her father remained kind ; and he allowed her to go to school to learn to read and write.

Thus the day of prosperity dawned upon the child who in obedience to the wise counsel of her mother prayed heartily to the Lord in the day of adversity, and treasured up in her memory each article of the Christian Faith.



